THE MIND AND ART OF POE'S POETRY

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THE MIND AND ART

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OF

POE'S POETRY

BY

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TO

My Wife,

MY INSPIRATION IN LIFE AND LETTERS

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PREFACE

THIS study of Poe's poetry has been made in the spirit suggested in Walter Pater's Preface to his *Renaissance*. These quotations are appropriate to the purpose: —

"The objects with which æsthetic criticism deals — music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life — are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or book, to *me?* What effect does it really have on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are original facts with which the æsthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realize such primary data for oneself, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience — metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere."

"And the function of the æsthetic critic is to distinguish, analyze, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which

a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced."

I have kept, whimsically, to a study of Poe's poetry and known no other poet the while; I have therefore no opinions to venture on questions of comparative merit.

This study would not have been possible but for the Stone and Kimball edition of Poe's works, collected and edited by Mr. E. C. Stedman and Professor G. E. Woodberry. The tenth volume furnishes a complete Variorum Text of the Poems. Reference has been made to this edition by volume and page.

Reference has been made also to that authoritative biography of Poe, in the American Men of Letters Series, by Professor Woodberry.

JOHN PHELPS FRUIT.

July, 1899.

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THE

MIND AND ART OF POE'S POETRY

PART FIRST

THE MIND OF POE'S POETRY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE artisan in letters is apt to exaggerate his ability as a critic. He is almost sure to assume the judicial attitude towards the Artist, and become dogmatic. He forgets that the creative Imagination is no denizen of his own "pent-up-in-Utica" sphere, and proceeds to deal with its products accordingly.

As to poetry, Hugo would remind him: "The poet is only limited by his aim; he considers nothing but the idea to be worked out; he recognizes no sovereignty, no necessity, save the idea: for since Art emanates from the Absolute, in Art, as in the Absolute, the end justifies the means. This is, it may be said in passing, one of those deviations from the ordinary terrestrial law which make the higher criticism muse and reflect, and which reveal to it the mysterious side of Art. In Art, above all, is visible the *quid divinum*. The poet moves in his work as Providence in its own. He excites, dismays, strikes; then

exalts or depresses, often in inverse ratio to your expectation, ploughing into your very soul through surprise. Now, consider, Art, like the Infinite, has a *Because* superior to all the *Whys*. Go and ask of the Ocean, that great lyric poet, the wherefore of a tempest. What seems to you odious or absurd has an inner reason for existing."

"Genius," Hugo says further, "is an entity like Nature, and requires, like Nature, to be accepted purely and simply. A mountain must be accepted as such, or left alone. There are men who would make a criticism on the Himalayas, pebble by pebble. . . . We take things as they are; we are on good terms with what is excellent, tender, or magnificent; we acquiesce in masterpieces; we do not make use of one to find fault with the other. . . . We are so far whimsical as to be satisfied if a thing is beautiful."

Coleridge remarks that "Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art." But, can we not find something in the way of criteria in the nature of poetry, and in the nature of the imagination, to avail us in determining if a given poem be a work of Art?

As an approach to something more definite, recall Spenser's dictum, —

> "For of the soul the body form doth take,
> For soul is form and doth the body make."

The prosaic researches of the psychologist and philologist corroborate the poet, demonstrating that thought works organically, absolutely conditioning the form of its expression.

Here is a clear statement of the difference between form that is mechanic, and that which is organic: "The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the proper-

ties of the material; as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops, itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form."

"A poem," to quote Coleridge again, "is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each compound part."

A poem is an organic whole, and whatever be the remoter purpose, the immediate end must be pleasure. This pleasure must be permanent; but "nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise." Beauty has its own excuse for being; a true poem is a thing of beauty.

Instead of calling that "high spiritual instinct impelling us to seek unity by harmonious adjustment," *imagination*, Coleridge coined the word *esemplastic*, meaning "to shape into one." It is apt to express that power of personality which shapes fugitive thought into artistic wholes.

"An immortal instinct," says Poe himself, "deep within the spirit of man, is . . . a sense of the Beautiful." It is this sense of the Beautiful that finds occasion for exercise of the esemplastic power.

So much is said to indicate the attitude of the writer, not as a critic, but as an interpreter. He believes that every genius has a message for the world and stands more in need of interpretation than of having his measurements taken by dogmatic criticism. He is of the opinion that to

trace the lucubrations of a poet's brain from their first manifestation to their full flowering in his finished work is not only fascinating, but profitable as fascinating; and that to get "the right good" of the poet is to "plunge soul-forward, headlong" into his works.

CHAPTER II

A YOUNG MAN OF GENIUS: A DREAMER

THE specific question of our theme is not what Poe's poetry is in kind, but what it is in itself.

That the "soul is form and doth the body make" points to the mind-content of poetry as of fundamental importance in our study. But we must remember that with the artist the soul-form is first in time, and the body-form after; while for the interpreter, the body-form comes first, the symbol of the soul-form. To get into the soul through the body requires thoroughly sympathetic study. There must be a nestling into the brain and heart of the poet, and particularly so in the case of a poet so subjective as Poe.

Fortunate for such a study, poets are born, but not born full-grown; they grow in wisdom and knowledge. Through their apprentice-work, therefore, we find an easy access to their mind and art.

Poe was turned eighteen when he published in 1827 the firstlings of his muse in a thin volume of forty pages: *Tamerlane and other Poems* (W. 30). By the time, however, he was eleven, he was "known as a versifier in both a gallant and a satiric vein" (W. 20; 1 : 7), but where are his verses to the little girls of Richmond, and where is the English ode to the retiring Master Clarke?

If the poems of the edition of 1827 were written, in any sense, in 1821–22 (W. 31), as he would have us believe, they must have been re-cast to include his reflections on

some crucial experiences that came to him in the years between 1823 and 1827 (W. 23 ; 1 : 9).

We can almost say he "lisp'd in numbers." In 1827 he was little more than a "grown up" boy, shy and reserved (W. 25).

What thoughts did he play host to at this age in his moments of reverie? There is one short poem of this volume entitled, from its first line, *The Happiest Day, The Happiest Hour* (10 : 121), that contains in a superlatively indefinite way what he further explicated and amplified. The first stanza is, —

> "The happiest day, the happiest hour
> My seared and blighted heart hath known,
> The highest hope of pride and power,
> I feel hath flown."

His attitude is that of a man whose life has been full of days of bitter experiences, and who has settled down to despair. He looks back to the past with a longing that the best has been, instead of having faith that "the best is yet to be." With a "seared" and "blighted" heart he gazes upon a bright spot in the bygone days. His highest hope has been dashed to earth. That hope was of *pride* and *power*. How indefinite! The hope of power has vanished long ago, and then as if ravished with reminiscent splendors he breaks out, —

> "The visions of my youth have been — "

and says no more than —

> "But let them pass."

This is telling us nothing. What "visions"?

Spurning pride, he says, —

> "Another brow may even inherit
> The venom thou hast poured on me, — "

and breaks off this tirade with —

> "Be still, my spirit!"

What does he mean by the venom of pride? What, by another's inheriting it? What, from the retrospect, is the conclusion as to the whole matter? This, —

> "But were that hope of pride and power
> Now offered, with the pain
> Even *then* I felt, — that brightest hour
> I would not live again."

Strange, that a man could repudiate his brightest, happiest hour as worth living again! Strange contradiction, to call that his happiest hour back to which he would not fly with winged feet! But he has his reason, and thus it runs, —

> "For on its wings was dark alloy,
> And, as it fluttered, fell
> An essence, powerful to destroy
> A soul that knew it well."

It is a strange philosophy to postulate a causal connection between pleasure and pain. Just as well say that day causes night. A stranger thing yet is that his soul knew *well* that essence, knew it was powerful to destroy, and yet could not forearm himself. This must be his notion of Fate that he rings the changes on so much. He does not confess weakness of will. Too proud for that. He seems to claim an acumen that penetrates the mere outwardness of things to look upon their inviolable natures. He beholds now the nature of his own soul, and now the nature of its mundane environment, and reckons with all the convincing (to himself) power of pure intuition, that he is elected to damnation. A man in this state of mind has "the human thirst for self-torture" his "crown of sorrow" — no, not *crown*, but luxury (6:45) — "is remembering happier things."

It may be suggested here that if Poe had announced a theme for the whole body of his poetry as the Epics do, it

would appropriately be, "I sing the luxury of sorrow." This would call for a man with his face towards his own past, brooding over its promises dashed to earth, and feeling himself mocked by Fate. He really rejoices that he is counted worthy to suffer these things, and so writes himself down a hero, that he, in the clear light of the situation, endures, when to slip the leash of the flesh were far easier.

Does this mean Poe? They are thoughts and sentiments coined thus early by him for currency. They tell his Art-theme. It remains to be seen how far he became in fact his own proselyte.

There is one thing to note in our study of this volume of 1827, namely, that the envelope, so to term it, of Poe's thought is a personality. This pronominal person speaks in every poem; every poem is therefore, in a sense, a dramatic monologue.

Tamerlane (10:196), the important poem of the edition of 1827, is an exhaustive explication, in the form of a story, of that we have been considering. The theme of it is, Tamerlane's happiest day and its consequent sorrow.

Poe, in his notes to the poem, confesses that he has taken "the full liberty of a poet," with the historical Tamerlane, begging, in one instance, the reader's pardon for making "a Tartar of the fourteenth century speak in the same language as a Boston gentleman of the nineteenth" (10:213). So we are not to trouble ourselves about the historical Tamerlane.

The poem opens with Tamerlane upon his death-bed. He is not, necessarily, old, but bowed down to death in sorrow and in shame. He calls for a friar that he may make a confession, but not with the purpose or hope of being shriven. He says, —

"Nor am I mad, to deem that power
Of earth may shrive me of the sin
Unearthly pride hath revell'd in —
I would not call thee fool, old man,
But hope is not a gift of thine;
If I *can* hope (O God! I can)
It falls from an eternal shrine."

He had not thought, until things were growing dim around him, to tell the secret of his shame and sorrow to any ear, except perhaps to the ghostly ear of that one whom he made in life, —

"All mystery but a simple name."

He is not to blame, his destiny has not been altogether in his own hands, hence he must confess.

He says that he *inherited* the hated portion which has scorched and seared his heart with a pain so intense that not even hell can make him fear again. That portion was a concomitant of the power and fame and worldly glory bequeathed to him, and it circled his throne as a demon-light.

This is the prologue. The rest of the poem is a feeling retrospect, tracing the genesis and growth of that pride — "unearthly pride" — that caused his fall. He begins so aptly and so significantly with a wail for the past,

"I have not always been as now."

He narrates that he first drew life in mountain air, and that his brain drank the venom of "the mists of Taglay," when, after victory with chamois, he felt himself

"The infant monarch of the hour."

After dream and storm, a strange light broke upon him, steeping his soul in mystery; he found himself no longer a child of nature; his passions were born, and he realized himself their bond-slave. Hard and tyrannical as men

deemed him innately to be in boyhood, "his iron heart in woman's weakness had a part." He has no words to tell "the loveliness of loving well." It is enough that the magic empire of that flame has fixed his soul, by what it lost for passion, unforgiven, upon the perilous brink of death. In his words, —

> "— her young heart the shrine
> On which my every hope and thought
> Were incense — then a goodly gift —
> For they were childish, without sin,
> Pure as her young example taught."

But he left it to follow, adrift, the fickle star of ambition. The hallowed memory of the years in which they grew in age and love together, came to him as the perfume of strange flowers known long ago, recalling sweet associations of life and love.

"She was worthy of all love!" — but ambition drugged his spirit and bade it dream of crime. A backward glance at those ecstatic days made them seem the enchantment, the strife of some evil demon that mocked him with brightest hopes to desert him at last to a broken heart. She whom he loved with divine passionateness became "the nothing of a name."

At this point in the story Tamerlane moralizes, and that so significantly, that his own words should be studied. The passage runs thus, —

> "The passionate spirit which hath known,
> And deeply felt the silent tone
> Of its own self-supremacy, —
> (I speak thus openly to thee,
> 'Twere folly *now* to veil a thought
> With which this aching breast is fraught)
> The soul which feels its innate right —
> The mystic empire and high power
> Given by the energetic might

Of Genius, at its natal hour;
Which knows (believe me at this time,
When falsehood were a tenfold crime,
There *is* a power in the high spirit
To *know* the fate it will inherit)
The soul, which knows such power, will still
Find *Pride* the ruler of its will."

Take note of how much he makes of the energetic might of the high spirit to probe the meaning of "these pictures of Time." What a depth and a stretch of insight to know the fate one will inherit! What does the future hold for such a soul? The misery of revealed destiny. A self-constituted martyr to fate, the chief market of his time is given to pictures of blighted hopes and horrible imaginings. And then he was proud; pride ruled his will. Pride and power, and power and pride, mingle themselves to make his theme.

He called himself a cottager when he sat on the throne of half the world, and murmured at his lowly lot. That kindling thought would have passed as dew before the morning sun, had not the beam of beauty come to oppress his mind with double loveliness.

The two walked together on the crown of a high mountain from which they looked down upon the dwindled hills, and bowers, and gushing rills, embracing, as in fairy bound, two hamlets, — their own, peaceful and happy.

At this moment came the suggestion that wrought all his woe, —

"I spoke to her of power and pride —
But mystically, in such guise,
That she might deem it nought beside
The moment's converse; in her eyes
I read (perhaps too carelessly)
A mingled feeling with my own;
The flush on her bright cheek, to me,

Seem'd to become a queenly throne
Too well, that I should let it be
A light in the dark wild, alone."

At this happiest hour came the thought to leave her, while both were young, to follow his high fate among the strife of nations. To gain an empire for a nuptial dowry — a queen's crown — was the secret thought that, with her own image, filled his fond breast. He pictured her silent, deep astonishment, when, after a few fleeting years, he returned, gilded with a conqueror's name, to claim her for his bride and queen.

This thought became an ideal to be attained forthwith and at any cost, so at noon of a bright summer's day, while she lay sleeping in her matted bower, a silent gaze was all the farewell he took of her; he was afraid to wake her; afraid to tell her of a feigned journey; afraid to trust the weakness of his heart to her soft thrilling voice, lest her eloquent love detain him from the grand conquests he had planned for her, so he hurried madly away, bounded eagerly away, to the field of conflict.

Then comes a bit of reflection beginning, —

"There is of earth an agony
Which, ideal, still may be
The worst ill of mortality,"

and the narrative transports us to Samarcand, the queen of earth, and to Timur her sovereign! But what has he now, who once had all? He says, —

"—— Power
Its venom secretly imparts;
Nothing have I with human hearts."

He warns the friar that it is not worth the while to re-tell the story of how his proud hopes, by deeds of might, clambered to a throne, — the world knew it well, but at

that moment of highest power, with *eyes* still on pomp and power, his *heart* was far away in the valleys of wild Taglay — in his own Ada's matted bower.

After the conflict and his high conquest, he lingered not long in Samarcand, but set out in a peasant's lowly guise to seek his long abandoned home. In these words he closes, —

> "I reach'd my home — my home no more —
> For all was flown that made it so —
> I pass'd from out its mossy door,
> In vacant idleness of woe.
> There met me on the threshold stone
> A mountain hunter, I had known
> In childhood, but he knew me not.
> Something he spoke of the old cot:
> It had seen better days, he said;
> *There* rose a fountain once, and *there*
> Full many a fair flower raised its head:
> But she who rear'd them was long dead,
> And in such follies had no part,
> What was there left me now? despair —
> A kingdom for a broken — heart."

Does not this *finale* make a sweet morsel of sorrow? The conception of "a passionate spirit, deeply feeling the silent tone of its own self-supremacy, feeling by innate right the mystic empire and high power of Genius," — the conception of such a spirit entangled by Fate, through love, in the meshes of his *pride* and *power*, is the sum and substance of *Tamerlane*.

In some stanzas on the reply of Nature to our intelligence (10 : 122), the speaker takes a backward look to youth, where he knew one gifted with secret communing with Earth from his life-dawn; his

> "— flickering torch of life was lit
> From the sun and stars, whence he had drawn forth
> A passionate light,"

and yet there was a mystery as to what had power over his spirit in the hour of its greatest fervor. Some demon of ill, as suggested in *Tamerlane?*

It may have been that his mind was wrought to ecstasy by the moonbeam that hung over him at that hour, and which was fraught with more sovereignty than ancient lore has told; or it may have been the unembodied essence of a thought.

The unembodied essence of a thought may pass over us as the quickening spell of the dew of night-time over the summer grass. It is not necessary that this mysterious power have association with rare or uncommon objects, but it does come really more effectively from things that lie each hour before us,

> "— but *then* only bid
> With a strange sound, as of a harp-string broken,
> To awake us."

It is this *strange* amid the common that is Poe's germ idea of beauty. Later he quoted, frequently therefor, the more definite expression of Lord Bacon's, "There is no exquisite beauty which has not some strangeness in its proportion" (6:317). But the last stanza of the poem with regard to this strangeness in the common reads:

> "'T is a symbol and a token
> Of what in other worlds shall be, and given
> In beauty by our God to those alone
> Who otherwise would fall from life and Heaven,
> Drawn by their heart's passion, and that tone,
> That high tone of the spirit, which hath striven,
> Though not with Faith, with godliness, — whose throne
> With desperate energy 't hath beaten down;
> Wearing its own deep feeling as a crown."

While the singer in *The Happiest Day*, and in *Tamerlane*, sings his own sorrows, and we gather from his reflections,

cast in with the current of the song, that he estimates himself a genius, yet in the first stanza of this third poem he is modest enough to say that in youth he had known "one," — a genius, certainly; because with him the Earth —

> "In secret, communing held, as he with it,
> In daylight, and in beauty from his birth;"

but in the second stanza the third personal pronoun is dropped and such expressions as "*my* mind is wrought," "I will half believe," tell who that "one" is.

The words "throne" and "crown" have the mind, in the above last stanza, to recur to Tamerlane in his career and fate.

This privileged character is doomed by the pride of his own high-toned spirit to destruction, so far as the gospel of Faith is of any avail, but the good tidings of Beauty save him to life and Heaven.

Thus far we have Poe's conception of a young man of genius. His life-creed is fixed by what he imagines to be the high tone of his spirit. The poet transports the young man, who is the monologist of this volume of 1827, to a point in time beyond youth, presumably to an age ripe with "old experience," from which he is made to look back upon his youth to moralize on life and fate. His reflections are upon youthful experiences, and no experience from after youth till the moment he retrospects is dwelt upon. To illustrate, in *Tamerlane*, he returns to his "long-abandoned" home, but the events between his slipping away to the wars and his return are dismissed as "a tale the world but knows too well."

This creature feels himself an aristocrat by favor of God, and is vouchsafed revelations, not in terms the fool can understand, but given in beauty. Thus isolated by natural endowment from the present, and with too keen an insight

into the To Be to admit the rosy hopes that obliterate the past, he naturally keeps company with gloomy thoughts.

There are four or five other poems of 1827 that are characteristic as thoughts and sentiments of this young man. The dominant idea is that of a waking thought, — from the dreams of youth. The dream was so bright, the reality so dull and disappointing.

In *A Dream* (10 : 134) he says, —

> "But a waking dream of life and light
> Hath left me broken-hearted.
>
> "Ah! what is not a dream by day
> To him whose eyes are cast
> On things around him with a ray
> Turned back upon the past?"

In the verses entitled *Dreams* (10 : 125), we have the same retrospect and same thought, —

> "Oh, that my young life were a lasting dream!
> My spirit not awakening, till the beam
> Of an Eternity should bring the morrow!
> Yes! though that long dream were of hopeless sorrow,
> 'T were better than the cold reality
> Of waking life to him whose heart must be,
> And hath been still, upon the lovely earth,
> A chaos of deep passion, from his birth."

Then these lines, —

> "But should it be — that dream eternally
> Continuing — as dreams have been to me
> In my young boyhood, — should it thus be given,
> 'T were folly still to hope for higher Heaven.
> For I have revelled, when the sun was bright
> In the summer sky, in dreams of living light
> And loveliness, — have left my very heart
> In climes of mine imagining, apart
> From mine own home, with beings that have been
> Of mine own thought — what more could I have seen?"

And again, —

"'T was once — and only once — and the wild hour
From my remembrance shall not pass — some power
Or spell had bound me ; 't was the chilly wind
Came o'er me in the night, and left behind
Its image on my spirit, or the moon
Shone on my slumbers in her lofty noon
Too coldly, or the stars, — howe'er it was,
That dream was as that night-wind — let it pass."

A strange light broke upon Tamerlane and steeped his soul in mystery, and he was not as he had been, a child of Nature, but under the tyranny of new-born passions that brought him to sorrow.

The final stanza of this poem is characteristic and reads,

"I *have been happy,* though in a dream.
I have been happy — and I love the theme —
Dreams ! in their vivid coloring of life,
As in that fleeting, shadowy, misty strife
Of semblance with reality, which brings
To the delirious eye more lovely things
Of Paradise and Love — and all our own —
Than young Hope in his sunniest hour hath known."

In the poem *Imitation* (10 : 227) there is the same looking back upon his youth as a mystery and a dream.

"A dark unfathom'd tide
Of interminable pride —
A mystery, and a dream,
Should my early life seem."

That dream was fraught with a wild, waking thought of beings that had been ; the vision on his spirit disenchanted him, bitterly disappointed him, and he concludes, —

"I care not tho' it perish
With a thought I then did cherish."

What was that thought? Perhaps it is suggested in *The Lake* (10: 225), where he reminds us that it was "in youth's Spring" that he found a spot that was lovely for its loneliness. It was a wild lake bound round with black rocks and tall towering pines. His "infant spirit" would sometimes wake with terror of this lone lake, and —

> "Yet that terror was not fright —
> But a tremulous delight,
> And a feeling undefined,
> Springing from a darken'd mind."

This is a skilfully graduated approach to the thought of suicide as expressed in these lines, —

> "Death was in that poison'd wave
> And in its gulf a fitting grave
> For him who thence could solace bring
> To his dark imagining;
> Whose wildering thought could even make
> An Eden of that dim lake."

Another poem, *Visit of the Dead* (10: 226), strikes one as the sequel, in thought, to *The Lake*. The attitude is of one who seriously contemplates seeking his grave in that dim lake, and is speculating with himself about it. So momentous is the question and so intense the feeling that, as from out a cloud of solemn revery, he whispers to himself as a second person.

He means that when he stands on the brink of that dark flood his soul will find itself alone, that not another of all the earth will be there, that the cause of the deed will be unknown, because none will be near to pry into this hour of secrecy. But, —

> "Be silent in that solitude,
> Which is not loneliness — for then
> The spirits of the dead, who stood

In life before thee, are again
In death around thee, and their will
Shall then o'ershadow thee — be still."

Why be still? To get courage?

"For the night, tho' clear, shall frown;
And the stars shall not look down
From their thrones, in the dark heaven,
With light like Hope to mortals given,
But their red orbs, without beam,
To thy withering heart shall seem
As a burning, and a fever
Which would cling to thee forever.
But 't will leave thee, as each star
In the morning light afar
Will fly thee — and vanish."

The next line is most significant, —

"But its *thought* thou canst not banish."

As much as to say that, though the forms of thought are fleeting, the influence of these forms abides always. The same idea is expressed in *Tamerlane*, —

"And I have held to memory's eye
One object — and but one — until
Its very form hath pass'd me by,
But left its influence with me still."

The poem concludes with the further encouragement that "the breath of God," which is "the summer breeze," will leave the mist upon the hill unbroken, and that shall charm him as a token and a symbol of the secrecy that shall be in him.

This is a most fitting climax in the thought, and in the expression of the thought, of this young man of genius, the monologist of the edition of 1827.

Poe's conception of this character is quite complete: he has genius, and though he does not call him a poet, he makes him sing so that is to be granted; the accidents and incidents of his life furnish him a theme, — The Luxury of Sorrow; and aback of all and essential to all, he is a Platonist.

CHAPTER III

BEAUTY

THERE is a poem entitled *Alone* (10 : 138) that, though not published till 1875, was dated — not in Poe's hand — "Baltimore, March 17, 1829," which, while it presents nothing that is peculiar to the edition of 1829, is, in a sense, a *résumé* of what we have had in the volume of 1827 ; and, because it echoes, especially, the sentiment of loneliness emphasized in *The Lake* and in *Visit of the Dead*, it affords a fitting transition from the one period to the other.

It reads, —

> "From childhood's hour I have not been
> As others were ; I have not seen
> As others saw ; I could not bring
> My passions from a common spring.
> From the same source I have not taken
> My sorrow ; I could not awaken
> My heart to joy at the same tone ;
> And all I loved. *I* loved alone.
> Then — in my childhood, in the dawn
> Of a most stormy life — was drawn
> From every depth of good and ill
> The mystery which binds me still :
> From the torrent, or the fountain,
> From the red cliff of the mountain,
> From the sun that round me rolled
> In its autumn tint of gold,
> From the lightning in the sky
> As it passed me flying by,

From the thunder and the storm,
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view."

The edition of 1829 bears the title, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane*, and *Minor Poems* (W. 47). We find several of the poems of 1827 here in new dress. *Tamerlane* has been thoroughly revised; *Visit of the Dead* has become *Spirits of the Dead* (10 : 128); *The Lake* has the title, *The Lake : To ——; Imitation* appears under this, *To ——; A Dream; Dreams; Evening Star;* and the Song, "I saw thee on thy bridal day," are the same familiars.

One poem, known in this edition as *Preface* (10 : 231)—put last! — is a sort of confession of his awakening from the romantic dreaming of his boyhood to the stern realities of fact. Romance was to him then a most knowing child, a painted paroquet, a most familiar bird, which taught him his alphabet and to lisp his earliest numbers; but succeeding years were too wild for song.

"O, then the eternal Condor years,
So shook the very Heavens on high,
With tumult as they thunder'd by;
I had no time for idle cares,
Thro' gazing on the unquiet sky!
Or if an hour with calmer wing
Its down did on my spirit fling,
That little hour with lyre and rhyme
To while away — forbidden thing!
My heart half fear'd to be a crime
Unless it trembled with the string."

The "lyre and rhyme" were forbidden things in a far deeper sense than one would at first suspect. He has discerned the iconoclastic spirit of modern science in its relation to poetry.

In the sonnet to *Science* which is subtitled *A Prologue to "Al Aaraaf"* (10 : 106), he thus expresses himself :

"Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art,
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities ?
How should he love thee ? or how deem thee wise,
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car,
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star ?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree ?"

That "happier star," to which escape the figures of old Romance so dear to poet's heart, is Al Aaraaf. And there, there is —

"— nothing earthly save the ray
(Thrown back from flowers) of Beauty's eye,
. . . . . .
— nothing earthly save the thrill
Of melody in woodland rill,
. . . . . .
— nothing of the dross of ours,
Yet all the beauty, all the flowers
That list our love, and deck our bowers."

Al Aaraaf takes its significance from the sonnet to Science. Poe believes, naturally, in the sentiments as against the feelingless inductions of logic. He is wedded in particular to the sentiment of beauty. We have already quoted that he spoke of something —

"— as a symbol and a token
Of what in other worlds shall be, and given
In beauty by our God to those alone
Who otherwise would fall from life and Heaven."

Beauty has, heretofore, been with him a well-spring of delight, but when Science says: "Away with the sentiments," it becomes to him an object of thought and pursuit, and hence an inspiration. This poem stands out as Poe's first effort in the championship of Beauty considered objectively.

He personifies the sentiment in the maiden Nesace, whom he makes queen of the wandering Al Aaraaf. The "Idea of Beauty" sprang into being there, and—

> "Falling in wreaths through many a startled star,
> Like woman's hair 'mid pearls, until, afar,
> It lit on hills Achaian, and there dwelt."

The story represents her kneeling and looking into Infinity,—

> "Rich clouds, for canopies, about her curled,
> Fit emblems of the model of her world,
> Seen but in beauty, not impeding sight
> Of other beauty glittering through the light,—
> A wreath that twined each starry form around,
> And all the opaled air in color bound."

Kneeling upon the richest bed of flowers the poet can picture, the Goddess's song, or message, is sent in odors up to Heaven, to the—

> "Spirit, that dwellest where,
> In the deep sky,
> The terrible and fair
> In beauty vie!
> . . . . . .
> Who livest—*that* we know—
> In Eternity—we feel—
> But the shadow of whose brow
> What spirit shall reveal?"

The message is to the effect that the beings whom Nesace has known, have dreamed for the Infinity of the Spirit "a model of their own" (10:220); the will of God

though has been done through the career of the wandering star. What that purpose was will become known—

"In the environs of Heaven."

The closing stanza of the song is, —

"By wingèd Fantasy
My embassy is given,
Till secrecy shall knowledge be
In the environs of Heaven."

She ceased and hid her burning cheek from the fervor of His eye. She spoke not, breathed not, yet there was the sound of silence, called by poets, "the music of the spheres." In contrast with which our world is a realm of noises, and words, and the word "silence" means *quiet.*

"All Nature speaks, and even ideal things
Flap shadowy sounds from visionary wings.'

The eternal voice of God answers her in a show of wrath, not towards her, but towards the creatures to whom she had been sent, because they had imagined a model of His Infinity. The consequence is His love is folly, and the crowd think His terrors manifested in the thunder-cloud, the storm, the earthquake, and the ocean-wrath, when in fact there is an "angrier path" in which they will cross Him.

Nesace is bidden to leave tenantless her crystal home, and fly with all her train athwart the heavens, to divulge the secrets of her embassy —

"To the proud orbs that twinkle, and so be
To every heart a barrier and a ban
Lest the stars totter in the guilt of man."

What is the guilt of man? Evidently that his conception of God is anthropomorphic and therefore utilitarian.

The crowd cannot accept the revelations given in beauty; she must "wing to other worlds another light."

Up from her shrine of flowers the maiden rose and bent her way over mountain and plain, but left not yet her "Therasæan reign" (10 : 221). Thus Part I. of the poem closes.

Part II. opens with a description of a temple —

> "High on a mountain of enamelled head."

The pile was upreared on gorgeous columns on the unburdened air, and flashed from Parian marble that twin smile upon the sparkling wave far below.

> "A dome, by linkèd light from Heaven let down,
> Sat gently on these columns as a crown;
> A window of one circular diamond, there,
> Looked out above into the purple air,
> And rays from God shot down that meteor chain
> And hallowed all the beauty twice again,
> Save when, between the empyrean and that ring,
> Some eager spirit flapped his dusky wing."

Now observe the effect of contrast in the further description, —

> "But on the pillars seraph eyes have seen
> The dimness of this world; that grayish green
> That Nature loves the best for Beauty's grave
> Lurked in each cornice, round each architrave
> And every sculptured cherub thereabout
> That from his marble dwelling peerèd out,
> Seemed earthly in the shadow of his niche, —
> Achaian statues in a world so rich!"

With a rush of wings, Nesace sweeps into her halls again, cheeks flushed, lips apart, —

> "From the wild energy of wanton haste."

She paused in the centre of that hall to breathe, and panted, —

> "Zanthe! all beneath
> The fairy light that kissed her golden hair,
> And longed to rest, yet could but sparkle there."

A silence stole over material things, and only the sound that springs from the spirit "bore burden" to the song the maiden sang to the "Bright beings" of her train to rouse them.

After addressing these beings *en masse*, she singles out Love, —

> "Oh, how, without you, Love!
> Could angels be blest?
> Those kisses of true love
> That lulled ye to rest!
> Up! shake from your wing
> Each hindering thing!
> The dew of the night,
> It would weigh down your flight;
> And the true love caresses,
> Oh, leave them apart!
> They are light on the tresses,
> But lead on the heart."

Next, she calls upon the harmony of Nature personified in Ligeia, —

> "Ligeia! Ligeia
> My beautiful one!
> Whose harshest idea
> Will to melody run,
> Oh, is it thy will
> On the breezes to toss?
> Or, capriciously still,
> Like the lone albatross,
> Incumbent on night
> (As she on the air)
> To keep watch with delight
> On the harmony there?

"Ligeia! wherever
Thy image may be,
No magic shall sever
Thy music from thee.
Thou hast bound many eyes
In a dreamy sleep,
But the strains still arise
Which thy vigilance keep:
The sound of the rain,
Which leaps down to the flower
And dances again
In the rhythm of the shower,
The murmur that springs
From the growing grass
Are the music of things,
But are modelled, alas!"

We might stop to quote that oft-repeated expression, "Every man is born an Aristotelian or a Platonist," then adduce *Al Aaraaf*, and particularly this lyric call to Ligeia, as proof of Poe's Platonisms. He believes in Plato's eternal world of Ideas. The word "modelled," used thus far more than once in this poem, indicates that all objects of sense are to be regarded as but earthly imitations of their divine prototypes. He expressed in the edition of 1827 his sense of mystery of how these earthly imitations partake of the essence of their divine ideal forms. He used such terms as "the unembodied essence of a thought," "bodiless spirits."

And then take the myth of the "Chariot of the Soul" and that of the "Other World" from the *Gorgias* and the *Phædo*, and one finds a kinship to Poe's myth *Al Aaraaf*.

Here is a paraphrase of a passage or two from Plato, quoted here for its appropriateness: "We mortals, says Socrates, know nothing of the real world, for we live along the shores of the Mediterranean like frogs around a swamp; and we think we are on the surface, when we

are really only in one of those hollow places of which our earth is full. But if a man could take wings and fly upwards, he would see the true world, which is a thousand leagues above our own; and there all things are brilliant with color, and sparkle with gold and purple, and a purer white than earthly snow. And there are trees and flowers and fruits, and jewels on all the hills, more precious than the sardonyx or emerald. And there are living beings there, both men and animals, dwelling around the air; for our air is like their sea, and their air is purest ether. And they know neither pain nor disease; and all their senses are keener and more perfect; and they have temples in which their gods really dwell, and they see them face to face, and hear their voices, and call them by their names. Moreover, they know the sun and moon and stars in their proper nature."

Again: "The gods and the immortal souls, whose steeds have full-grown wings, are carried by a revolution of the spheres into a celestial world beyond, where all space is filled by a sea of intangible essence which the mind — 'lord of the soul' — alone can contemplate: and here are the absolute ideas of Truth and Beauty and Justice. And in these divine pastures of pure knowledge the soul feeds during the time that the spheres revolve, and rests in perfect happiness, and then returns to the heavens whence it came, where the steeds feast in their stalls on nectar and ambrosia. But only to a few souls out of many is it granted to see these celestial visions."

Poe believed himself to be one of the few to whom revelations in beauty were given.

Then, to take up the poem again, comes the response to the summons, —

> "Spirits in wing, and angels to the view,
> A thousand seraphs burst the empyrean through —"

It was the simoon to depopulate that errant but blissful realm, yet —

> "Sweet was their death — with them to die was rife
> With the last ecstasy of satiate life;
> Beyond that death no immortality."

This is the death the poet ponders, exclaiming, —

> "And there, oh, may my weary spirit dwell,
> Apart from Heaven's Eternity — and yet how far from Hell!"

Who died that death? There were two in that shrubbery dim who heard not that stirring call. They were a maiden-angel and her seraph-lover, Ianthe and her Angelo. He was a sentimental creature. Read this, —

> "He was a goodly spirit — he who fell:
> A wanderer by moss-y-mantled well,
> A gazer on the lights that shine above,
> A dreamer in the moonbeam by his love.
> What wonder? for each star is eye-like there,
> And looks so sweetly down on Beauty's hair;
> And they, and every mossy spring were holy
> To his love-haunted heart and melancholy."

Despite his sentimentality he is a devotee at Beauty's shrine; but picture the posture of these lovers when the catastrophe comes, —

> "The night had found (to him a night of woe)
> Upon a mountain crag young Angelo;
> Beetling it bends athwart the solemn sky,
> And scowls on starry worlds that down beneath it lie.
> Here sate he with his love, his dark eye bent
> With eagle gaze along the firmament;
> Now turned it upon her, but ever then
> It trembled to the orb of Earth again."

He yearned for the beauty he had left behind on earth when Death stole over his senses so softly that not a single

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silken hair awoke that slept. He said as he looked so far away, —

> "The last spot of Earth's orb I trod upon
> Was a proud temple called the Parthenon;
> More beauty clung around her columned wall
> Than even thy glowing bosom beats withal;
> And when old Time my wing did disenthrall,
> Thence sprang I as the eagle from his tower,
> And years I left behind me in an hour.
> What time upon her airy bounds I hung,
> One half the garden of her globe was flung,
> Unrolling as a chart unto my view;
> Tenantless cities of the desert too!
> Ianthe, beauty crowded on me then,
> And half I wished to be again of men."

How different is the sentiment here from that in *Tamerlane!* There it was the passionate love of woman, here it is the passionate love of Beauty. Ianthe is undeceived by this last speech, and begins her reply with an exclamation of surprise, —

> "My Angelo! and why of them to be?
> A brighter dwelling-place is here for thee,
> And greener fields than in yon world above,
> And woman's loveliness, and passionate love."

He insisted that her star was the —

> "Dread star! that came, amid a night of mirth,
> A red Dædalion on the timid Earth."

She replied, —

> "But, Angelo, than thine gray Time unfurled
> Never his fairy wing o'er fairer world!
> Dim was its little disk, and angel eyes
> Alone could see the phantom in the skies,
> When first Al Aaraaf knew her course to be
> Headlong thitherward o'er the starry sea;
> But when its glory swelled upon the sky,
> As glowing Beauty's bust beneath man's eye,
> We paused before the heritage of men,
> And thy star trembled — as doth Beauty then!"

Thus in discourse they whiled away the night that brought no day. They heard not the summons; they fell, and by example point the moral that —

> "Heaven to them no hope imparts
> Who hear not for the beating of their hearts."

What has this episode to do with the theme of the poem? To illustrate, perhaps, what it is to "totter in the guilt of man." It is to emphasize the saving worth of Beauty. The passionate love of Beauty is to be put above the passionate love of sex. It is Poe himself, and not the guise of another, that is speaking in this volume of 1829, and he is out and out Platonic. Beauty must be set above knowledge, that is, scientific knowledge.

After making so much of Beauty in *Al Aaraaf*, he finds a simile in which to express the "glow of beauty." The two stanzas entitled *To the River* —— (10 : 132) develop the analogy and are, in effect, climactic to *Al Aaraaf*, —

> "Fair river! in thy bright, clear flow
> Of crystal, wandering water,
> Thou art an emblem of the glow
> Of beauty — the unhidden heart,
> The playful maziness of art,
> In old Alberto's daughter;
>
> "But when within thy wave she looks,
> Which glistens then, and trembles,
> Why, then, the prettiest of brooks
> Her worshipper resembles;
> For in his heart, as in thy stream,
> Her image deeply lies —
> His heart which trembles at the beam
> Of her soul-searching eyes."

This is an exquisite repetition of the idea quoted above, from the close of *Al Aaraaf*, as to the behavior of the

Earth when that wandering star paused before the heritage of men.

Laying aside the revision of those poems from 1827 that find themselves in this volume, — since there is nothing new in thought in them, — the very topic of every poem, except two, is *Beauty*. When Beauty is thus obtruded upon our attention, we are apt to see, or imagine we see, the Beautiful. We are in condition of mind to make a wrong estimate of the poems of 1829. The two poems, *To* —— (10:133), *Fairy-Land* (10:234), do not take beauty for their topic, yet they bring to us the sense of the pleasure of beauty.

In the first, he conceives her lips to be the bowers whence pours forth, in her lip-begotten words, all the melody of the wantonest singing birds. In dreams he conceives this. Her eyes, enshrined in Heaven of heart, fall upon his funereal mind, desolately, like starlight on a pall. This sentiment takes us back to the dominant mood of 1827. Thus speaking of her lips and thinking of her eyes as expressive of the heart whence these finer issues of life flow, he both laments and moralizes, —

> "Thy heart — *thy* heart! — I wake and sigh,
> And sleep to dream till day
> Of the truth that gold can never buy
> Of the bawbles that it may."

In the second, *Fairy-Land*, we have his conception of that shadowy realm into which childhood and youth have made so many excursions. It has dim vales, shadowy floods, cloudy-looking woods where forms are lost in the trees that drip all over. This is his brief topography of the region.

But look up to see huge moons — not one — waxing and waning every moment of the night, putting out the starlight with the breath of their pale faces! Now watch one,

more filmy than the rest, coming down with its centre upon the very tip of a mountain's eminence. It comes down, and still down, until the wide circumference of its easy drapery spreads over hamlets, rich halls; over strange woods, the sea; over spirits on the wing, and every drowsy creature, and quite buries them in a labyrinth of light! How they must sleep!

> "In the morning they arise,
> And their moony covering
> Is soaring in the skies,
> With the tempests as they toss."

They do not use that moon any more for a tent — what extravagance! —

> "Its atomies, however,
> Into a shower dissever,
> Of which those butterflies,
> Of Earth, who seek the skies,
> And so come down again
> (The unbelieving things!)
> Have brought a specimen
> Upon their quivering wings."

Is it worth while to dwell upon the wealth of suggestion in these two poems? You cannot by taking thought exhaust their meaning. For instance, the more you listen to the melody of those lips, the richer becomes the Eldorado of song and soul aback of them. The more you try to fashion in your imagination, "Thine eyes, in Heaven of heart enshrined," the more is the pleasure multiplied. There is infinite room for the play-impulses of the mind to engage themselves in trying to realize vividly the "lips" and the "eyes" that connote so much.

Or is there not pure pleasure in the exercise of the imagination that pictures that huge moon as it uses the pinnacle of a high mountain as a tent-pole, and spreads

itself out over all drowsy things? and then to picture these creatures awaking out of sleep in the morning to behold their moony covering soaring away into the sky; the upper air-currents, however, tear it into pieces and shower it down to them in butterflies whose quivering wings are specimens of its texture? Is this a picture for children? Deep wisdom lies underneath it.

Without mention of beauty, Poe, in these two poems, gives infinite range to the play of the imagination, and therewith the supreme pleasure of the Beautiful. Perhaps the theme is nothing, and the treatment all. We shall see what stress he lays on workmanship.

One thing is sure, he was not utilitarian. In singing —

> "Of the truth that gold can never buy,"

he realized that the essential qualities of a thing of beauty are in some way typical of the Divine attributes.

CHAPTER IV

POETRY

IN the prefatory letter to the edition of 1831 (10 : 144), Poe says he believes that only a portion of the former volume is worthy of a second edition. He includes, of course, *Al Aaraaf* and *Tamerlane*, and adds: "Nor have I hesitated to insert from the 'Minor Poems' now omitted, whole lines, and even passages, to the end that, being placed in a fairer light and the trash shaken from them in which they were imbedded, they may have some chance of being seen by posterity." Following out this idea, he has inserted in *Tamerlane*, bodily, *The Lake* (10 : 127–(225)), and fourteen lines from *To* —— (10 : 228) — second version of *Imitation* of 1827. There are two other poems, namely, *Introduction* (10 : 231) (*Preface*, of 1829); and *Fairy-Land*, both extended. Add to these six new poems: *To Helen*, *Israfel*, *The Doomed City*, *Irene*, *A Pæan*, *The Valley of Nis*, we have the volume of 1831, of 124 pages, entitled *Poems* (W. 58).

The expansion found in *Introduction* is significant. In the first version of it — *Preface*, 1829 — he spoke of Romance as, to him, a painted paroquet and a most familiar bird, that taught him to lisp his earliest word while he, a child, was in the wildwood, with a most knowing eye. Then the eternal Condor years with their tumult gave him no time for idle cares, and forbade him to while away a little hour with "lyre and rhyme."

This is the sum of *Preface*, on which we have already said a word.

After representing himself as a child with a most knowing eye, he inserts twenty-four lines, descriptive, first, of the succeeding years, and then of himself as an idle boy. These lines contain his reasons for the sober conclusion of his prefatory letter, that only a small portion of his former volume was worthy of a second edition. He says, —

> "Succeeding years, too wild for song,
> Then roll'd like tropic storms along,
> Where, tho' the garish lights that fly,
> Dying along the troubled sky
> Lay bare, thro' vistas thunder-riven,
> The blackness of the general Heaven,
> That very blackness yet doth fling
> Light on the lightning's silver wing."

This is indeed a graphic picture of the course of his life from boyhood to young manhood, when he wrote these lines. He was in his twenty-third year!

Now note his review of himself during these years, —

> "For, being an idle boy lang syne,
> Who read Anacreon and drank wine,
> I early found Anacreon rhymes
> Were almost passionate sometimes —
> And by strange alchemy of brain
> His pleasures always turn'd to pain —
> His naiveté to wild desire —
> His wit to love — his wine to fire —
> And so, being youth and dipt in folly
> I fell in love with melancholy,
> And used to throw my earthly rest
> And quiet all away in jest —
> I could not love except where Death
> Was mingling his with Beauty's breath —
> Or Hymen, Time, and Destiny
> Were stalking between her and me."

This is Poe's unmasked confession, and it tracks the thoughts of his objectified genius of 1827. We shall see if he gets entirely away from these sentiments later, as the confession naturally leads us to expect.

Then thirty lines are added where the version of 1829 ends. These lines consort well enough with the preceding insertion to have followed immediately. He says that his soul now has too much room, and that the glory and gloom are gone, that the black has mellowed into gray, and that all the fires are paling. With a word to the effect that he has revelled, and his draught of passion has been deep, he very meaningly says, —

> "And after-drunkenness of soul
> Succeeds the glories of the bowl —
> And idle longing night and day
> To dream my very life away.
>
> "But dreams — of those who dream as I,
> Aspiringly, are damned, and die."

We recall that he wrote in 1827 as one looking back upon a life full of bitter experiences, but he says that if he should swear he meant only, —

> "By notes so very shrilly blown,
> To break upon Time's monotone,
> While yet my vapid joy and grief
> Are tintless of the yellow leaf,"

that no imp of old gray-bearded Time will thrust his shadow across his way, but that the graybeard himself will connivingly overlook his dreaming book. How could old Time be offended with his book since it gives voice merely to the vapid joy and grief that is tintless of the sere and yellow leaf? The old graybeard only laughs.

Awakened to the significance, or insignificance, of his past dreaming, he turns to the saner question of what con-

stitutes true poetry, and formulates a theory in opposition to the heresy of the Lake School. It is in the prefatory letter that we have the discussion. As against instruction being the end of poetry, he says, "*ceteris paribus*, he who pleases is of more importance to his fellow-men than he who instructs, since utility is happiness, and pleasure is the end already obtained which instruction is merely the means of obtaining."

Continuing: "I see no reason, then, why our metaphysical poets should plume themselves so much on the utility of their works, unless indeed they refer to instruction with eternity in view; in which case, sincere respect for their piety would not allow me to express my contempt for their judgment, — contempt which it would be difficult to conceal, since their writings are professedly to be understood by the many who stand in need of salvation. In such case I should no doubt be tempted to think of the devil in 'Melmoth,' who labors indefatigably through three octavo volumes to accomplish the destruction of one or two souls, while any common devil would have demolished one or two thousand."

Again: "Against the subtleties which would make poetry a study — not a passion — it becomes the metaphysician to reason — but the poet to protest. . . . As regards the greater truths, men oftener err by seeking them at the bottom than at the top; the depth lies in the huge abysses where wisdom is sought — not in the palpable palaces where she is found. The ancients were not always right in hiding the goddess in a well; witness the light which Bacon has thrown upon philosophy; witness the principles of our divine faith — that moral mechanism by which the simplicity of a child may over-balance the wisdom of a man."

These lines are italicized for emphasis: "*Poetry above*

all things is a beautiful painting whose tints to minute inspection are confusion worse confounded, but start boldly out to the cursory glance of the connoisseur."

In other words, six inches off is too close to feel the force of Beauty expressed in the Venus of Milo, however much of the texture of the marble that range may reveal. Art and science look at the same thing from quite different standpoints.

"A poem, in my opinion, is," he says, "opposed to a work of science by having, for *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having, for its object, an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with *in*definite sensations, to which end music is an *essential*, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is simply music; the idea, without the music, is prose, from its very definiteness."

Here we have stated in clear enough prose what Poe knew instinctively all the while, and which he had exemplified first conspicuously, in portions of *Al Aaraaf*, namely, that music and perceptible images combined was poetry. The music of the verse competes with the pictures of the words and phrases for the attention, and there results an indefinite conception that is pleasurable.

Rancor towards the metaphysical poets was the prime moulding force of his opinion. Didacticism in Art was to him intolerable.

Having made up his mind, in this edition of 1831, and expressed it in verse and prose as to his former poetry, and also having settled, discursively, what high art in poetry is, he writes in an exultant tone the three stanzas, *To Helen* (10 : 77). Note how the sentiment of the poem

reveals his state of mind with reference to Beauty and Art.

"Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicæan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

"On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs, have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

"Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!"

This is said too with an eye turned back to the past. And then, as if to emphasize that poetry is a matter of the heart and not an affair of the head, he wrote *Israfel* (10 : 179, 29).

"Therefore thou art not wrong,
Israfeli, who despisest
An unimpassioned song;
To thee the laurels belong,
Best bard, because the wisest:
Merrily live, and long!

"The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit:
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervor of thy lute;
Well may the stars be mute!"

We have the idealistic realism of *Al Aaraaf* in —

"Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
Is a world of sweets and sours;

Our flowers are merely — flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours."

His " heart-strings are a lute,"

" And they say (the starry choir
And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
By which he sits and sings,
The trembling living wire
Of those unusual strings."

Then the poet says, —

"If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky."

" For passionate love is still divine," is from the first edition of *Tamerlane*, and though the poet in *Introduction*, reviewing the past, says he could not love except where Death was mingling his with Beauty's breath, or Hymen, Time, and Destiny stalking in between — as if to quit these themes — yet passionate love and " dead Beauty " recur in *A Pœan*, first version of *Lenore*, and in *Irene*.

In the former (10 : 167) the question is how shall the requiem for the loveliest dead be sung. Her friends are gazing on her gaudy bier, and weep! They loved her for her wealth, but hated her for her pride, and now that she is dead they *love* her. While they speak of her " costly broidered pall," they tell the singer — the lover — he should not sing at all, unless so mournfully as to do the dead no wrong, but he says, —

"But she is gone above,
With young Hope at her side,
And I am drunk with love
Of the dead, who is my bride."

Thinking of the heartless love of friends, he continues,

"From more than fiends on earth
Thy life and love are riven,
To join the untainted mirth
Of more than thrones in heaven—

"Therefore, to thee this night
I will no requiem raise,
But waft thee on thy flight,
With a Pæan of old days."

The indignity of heartless sympathizers caused him, "drunk with love," to change his song from a requiem to a pæan.

In *Irene* (10 : 163), which is the first version of *The Sleeper* (10 : 14), there is a description of a moonlight midnight in the sweet month of June, where a dewy, drowsy, and dim influence settles down upon the soul as one watches the gray towers wrapping the fog about their breasts to moulder into sleep; or the lake looking like Lethe; or the rosemary asleep upon the grave; or the million bright pines rocking lullabies to the lone oak.

On such a night all beauty sleeps, and behold, a casement open to the skies and therein Irene, with her destinies! The moon would question the wonder of her being there, and calls upon her to awake, but the lady sleeps.

Immediately after the expression, "The lady sleeps," comes, the "*dead* all sleep," with "dead" italicized, which furnishes the cue for eighteen lines omitted in the revised *Sleeper*. The *dead* all sleep, at least while love weeps; the spirit loves to lie, entranced, so long as Mem-

ory cannot keep back the tears, but when light laughter can choke the sigh, —

> "Indignant from the tomb doth take
> Its way to some remember'd lake,
> Where oft — in life — with friends — it went
> To bathe in the pure element,
> And there from the untrodden grass,
> Wreathing for its transparent brow
> Those flowers that say (ah hear them now!)
> To the night-winds as they pass,
> 'Ai! ai! alas! — alas!'
> Pores for a moment, ere it go,
> On the clear waters there that flow,
> Then sinks within (weigh'd down by woe)
> Th' uncertain, shadowy heaven below."

Wholly parenthetical as this passage is, it speaks his bitter sneer at the transiency of earthly love.

She is worthy of all love, therefore he would have her sleep be deep as it is lasting. He would have —

> "That chamber chang'd for one more holy —
> That bed for one more melancholy.
>
> "Far in the forest, dim and old,
> For her some tall vault unfold,
> Against whose sounding door she hath thrown,
> In childhood, many an idle stone —
> Some tomb which oft hath flung its black
> And vampire-winged panels back,
> Flutt'ring triumphant o'er the palls
> Of her old family funerals."

In *A Pæan*, the vital soul of "the loveliest dead" is before the mind's eye: "She is gone above, with young Hope at her side;" "her life and love are riven from more than fiends on earth to the untainted mirth of heaven." In *Irene*, it is the body of the "lady sweet" that is in attention: he would have that chamber with case-

ment open to the skies, and to the "wanton airs" and "tinted shadows," exchanged for one more holy, and for a bed more melancholy, where no icy worms could creep about her; such a place would be some tall ancestral vault, far away in a forest, dim and old.

The Doomed City (10: 174) has for its theme not love nor beauty, but such forbidding things as Death and Hell; yet the poem is one that ministers immediately to pleasure. There being no beauty in the topic itself, it must reside in the treatment.

Death has reared himself a throne in this strange city, where there are shrines and palaces and towers, but not like ours, for —

> "— *ours* never loom
> To heaven with that ungodly gloom!
> Time-eaten towers that tremble not!
> Around, by lifting winds forgot,
> Resignedly beneath the sky
> The melancholy waters lie."

There are no stars there, no holy rays come down upon the long night-time of the place, but —

> "Light from the lurid, deep sea
> Streams up the turrets silently —
> Up thrones — up long-forgotten bowers
> Of sculptur'd ivy and stone flowers —
> Up domes — up spires — up kingly halls —
> Up fanes — up Babylon-like walls —
> Up many a melancholy shrine
> Whose entablatures intertwine
> The mask — the viol — and the vine."

No ripples curve the surface of the melancholy waters, which are spread out around as a wilderness of glass.

> "So blend the turrets and shadows there
> That all seem pendulous in air,
> While from the high towers of the town
> Death looks gigantically down."

Then comes a stir, a ripple, and a sinking of the turret-tops that make a vacuum in the filmy Heaven; the waves grow redder; there are no earthly moons as down, down it settles, —

> " Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
> Shall do it reverence,
> And Death to some more happy clime
> Shall give his undivided time."

In *The Valley Nis* (10 : 172), which is the first version of *The Valley of Unrest* (10 : 21), there is a description of the valley when *once* it smiled a silent dell, contrasted with it *now* when nothing there is motionless. These lines will serve to illustrate the point in the poem, —

> " There the gorgeous clouds do fly,
> Rustling everlastingly,
> Through the terror-stricken sky,
> Rolling like a waterfall
> O'er the horizon's fiery wall —
> There the moon doth shine by night
> With a most unsteady light —
> There the sun doth reel by day
> ' Over the hills and far away.' "

It would be difficult to find the sentiment of unrest more picturesquely — poetically — presented.

CHAPTER V

THE ARTIST

POE claimed that poetry was with him a passion, and his handiwork in verse corroborates the claim. One would suppose that because he set so much store by passion, that he would let passion find its own utterance; but he was keenly cognizant of the value of the technique of verse. The evidence of this we have in his being a constant reviser of his poems. Conspicuous in the edition of 1829 is the revision of *Tamerlane*, and further revisions of other poems in 1831 and in the volume of 1845.

We are to discuss in another section Poe's art; but here, where we are taking account of his thoughts, it seems opportune to recognize the fact that, apart from his theme and the thoughts that coursed about it with a fervor that makes him a *poet*, he had also thoughts about poetical expression that, in the end, make him an *artist*.

The collection of 1845 is entitled, *The Raven and Other Poems* (W. 248). Besides fourteen new numbers, we find the following revisions of poems of 1831: *The Valley of Unrest* was *The Valley of Nis; Lenore* was *A Pœan; The Sleeper* was *Irene; The City in the Sea* was *The Doomed City; Israfel* is unchanged in title. To all this is added "Poems in Youth," — with a foot-note (10 : 96).

The Coliseum (10 : 26), first published in 1833, recalls the verses to Helen of 1831, in which the wayworn wanderer is brought home by her classic face.

"To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome."

The verses to Helen are his tribute to the glory that was Greece, while *The Coliseum* is his tribute to the grandeur that was Rome.

The Coliseum is the —

"Rich reliquary
Of lofty contemplation left to Time
By buried centuries of pomp and power!"

After many days the weary pilgrim kneels, an altered man, amid the shadows of that type of antique Rome, and lets his soul drink in the very grandeur, gloom, and glory.

"Vastness, and Age, and Memories of Eld!
Silence, and Desolation, and dim Night!"

He asks if the "mouldering plinths," "vague entablatures," "shattered cornices," and the wreck and ruin are:

"All of the famed and the colossal left
By the corrosive Hours to Fate and me?
'Not all' — the Echoes answer me — 'not all!
Prophetic sounds and loud arise forever
From us, and from all Ruin, unto the wise,
As melody from Memnon to the Sun.
We rule the hearts of mightiest men — we rule
With a despotic sway all giant minds.
We are not impotent, we pallid stones:
Not all our power is gone, not all our fame,
Not all the magic of our high renown,
Not all the wonder that encircles us,
Not all the mysteries that in us lie,
Not all the memories that hang upon
And cling around about us as a garment,
Clothing us in a robe of more than glory.'"

These lines, as well as those to Helen, show that he could look back upon another than his own imagined past, and gather inspiration from its Beauty and its Grandeur.

The *Catholic Hymn* (10 : 28) has a different ring from that of 1827, which claimed that revelations were given in beauty to some who would otherwise fall from life and Heaven. After addressing the Mother of God he says,

> "When the hours flew brightly by,
> And not a cloud obscured the sky,
> My soul, lest it should truant be,
> Thy grace did guide to thine and thee."

That is in the past, and —

> "Now, when storms of fate o'ercast
> Darkly my Present and my Past,
> Let my Future radiant shine
> With sweet hopes of thee and thine!"

It is easy to see how fate overcasts the present, but how can it extend to the past? As explained in the *Happiest Day, the Happiest Hour*, and in *Tamerlane?* If "fate" can overspread with black a bright past, it is not clear how he could, with hope, supplicate the Virgin for a radiant future. His philosophy and religion hang awry.

The *Scenes from "Politian"* (10 : 49), published in 1835, is a story — in dramatic form — of passionate love. The scene is laid in Rome. Count Castiglione and Alessandra are betrothed; he is, however, "heels over head" in love with Lalage. The Duke, the Count's father, announces that Politian, the Earl of Leicester, is hourly expected from England in Rome, and they must have him at the wedding. Politian, in Rome, is captivated by the sentiment of a song that he had often heard in merry England. Going into the gardens of the Palace to seek the singer, he finds Lalage, who, upon a declaration of his love, agrees to fly with him to —

> "a land new found,
> Miraculously found by one of Genoa,
> A thousand leagues within the golden west.

A fairy land of flowers and fruit and sunshine,
And crystal lakes, and over-arching forests,
And mountains, around whose towering summits the winds
Of Heaven untrammelled flow — which air to breathe
Is happiness now, and will be freedom hereafter
In days that are to come?"

but before she can take this step —

"A deed is to be done — Castiglione lives!"

Politian rushes out to find Castiglione, challenges him, but knowing no cause why he should fight, Castiglione declines. Politian insults him to his face, when they both draw. Politian advances with a formula to the effect that he devotes Castiglione to the untimely sepulchre in the name of Lalage. At the sound of that name, Castiglione is nerveless, and refuses to fight. With a vow from Politian to insult him in public, they part. Castiglione reflects, — on his falseness to Alessandra, —

"Now this, indeed, is just —
Most righteous, and most just — avenging Heaven!"

The sonnet, *To Zante* (10 : 24) is colorless like *The Happiest Day*. At the name of the "fair isle," what memories of radiant hours awake!

"How many scenes of what departed bliss,
How many thoughts of what entombèd hopes,
How many visions of a maiden that is
No more — no more upon thy verdant slopes!"

What scenes of departed bliss? Picture them yourself. What entombed hopes? Say yourself. What visions of a fair maiden? Imagine them yourself. Do your best, and then think of them as being "no more," and the charms of the island are gone; it becomes accursed ground. "No more!" is the magical sad sound that transforms all.

A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king."

This was all in the olden time long ago before the demon-light shone round his throne.

"But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate;
(Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate!)
And round about his home the glory
That blushed and bloomed,
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

"And travellers now within that valley
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody;
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out forever,
And laugh — but smile no more."

This poem is quoted in *The Fall of the House of Roderick Usher* (1: 143) as one of the rhapsodies of Roderick Usher, one of his "rhymed verbal improvisations." The context gives us a psychological analysis, so to speak, of the soil out of which this flower of song grows. Here is one sentence from the context: "If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher." Was an idea ever better painted than in the *Haunted Palace?*

The lines on *Silence* (10: 25) mention in a speculative tone something about a "twin entity" that comes of matter and light evinced in solid and shade, then runs, —

"There is a twofold Silence — sea and shore,
Body and soul. One dwells in lonely places,
Newly with grass o'ergrown; some solemn graces,

> Some human memories and tearful lore,
> Render him terrorless: his name 's 'No More.'
> He is the corporate Silence: dread him not:
> No power hath he of evil in himself."

That means the silence of the grave. In *Al Aaraaf* he speaks of "A sound of silence on the startled ear," and then says —

> "All Nature speaks, and even ideal things
> Flap shadowy sounds from visionary wings."

Personify this shadowy sound of the tomb in the name, "No More;" he is terrorless, —

> "But should some urgent fate (untimely lot!)
> Bring thee to meet his shadow (nameless elf,
> That haunteth the lone regions where hath trod
> No foot of man), commend thyself to God!"

"That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done."

Poe was deeply impressed with the idea of Silence as the eternal voice of God, as the music of the spheres. In *Silence — A Fable* (1: 242), the Demon cursed the elements with the curse of tumult that he might observe the actions of the man upon that lone gray rock: the man trembled in his solitude; the night waned and he sat upon the rock.

"Then I grew angry and cursed, with the curse of *silence*, the river, and the lilies, and the wind, and the forest, and the heaven, and the thunder, and the sighs of the water-lilies. And they became accursed, and *were still.*

"And mine eyes fell upon the countenance of the man and his countenance was wan with terror. And hurriedly, he raised his head from his hand, and stood forth upon the rock and listened. But there was no voice through-

out the vast illimitable desert, and the man shuddered, and turned his face away, and fled afar off, in haste, so that I beheld him no more."

When things around one are cursed with such a silence as the Demon pictures, one might question if he himself is not passing away.

We may conjecture that the *No More!* of *To Zante*, and the "No More" of *Silence* are the germinal form of the "Nevermore" of *The Raven.*

The expression also indicates a change of mental attitude from that of 1827 in *The Happiest Day*, where he would not live over that happiest hour, were it given him again. Here it is the sorrow that it can be no more. Then it was the luxury of sorrow for a happiness that, simply, had been, now it is the luxury of sentiment for a happiness that can never be again.

The first version of the verses entitled *To One in Paradise* (10:79) was published in January, 1834, as a part of that story of Venice, *The Assignation* (1:258). In the edition of 1845, taken out of its connection with the story, the last stanza is omitted, and revisions made.

"In what ethereal dances,
By what Italian streams,"

becomes

"In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams."

There is evidently a connection in thought between this poem and the sonnet *To Zante:* Zante was a fair isle. Here he says,—

"Thou wast all that to me, love,
For which my soul did pine:
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine."

And then we have an iteration of the "no more" mentioned above, —

"For, alas! alas! with me
The light of Life is o'er!
No more — no more — no more —
(Such language holds the solemn sea
To the sands upon the shore)
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar."

The new attitude of mind is expressed in the last stanza,

"And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy gray eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams —
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams."

The *Conqueror Worm* (10 : 33) was published first in 1843, and made a part of *Ligeia* (1 : 190) in 1845. It is an allegory: the conception is epic; the theme is "the tragedy, Man." The time is within "the lonesome latter years," which expression recalls the sentiment of Campbell's *Last Man.* It is a gala night, and there sit in a theatre a throng of angels "bedight in veils and drowned in tears," to see —

"A play of hopes and fears,
While the orchestra breathes fitfully
The music of the spheres.

"Mimes, in the form of God on high,
Mutter and mumble low,
And hither and thither fly;
Mere puppets they, who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things
That shift the scenery to and fro,
Flapping from out their condor wings
Invisible Woe."

It is a motley drama. The crowd chase a Phantom that returns ever in a circle to the self-same spot; and the soul of the plot has much of Madness, and more of Sin, and Horror.

"But see amid the mimic rout
A crawling shape intrude:
A blood-red thing that writhes from out
The scenic solitude!
It writhes — it writhes! — with mortal pangs
The mimes become its food,
And seraphs sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued."

The lights are out and the curtain falls over each quivering form —

"While the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, 'Man,'
And its hero, the Conqueror Worm."

Poe is not far from the climax in the treatment of his universal theme, Ruin, when he conceives for man a situation at which the angels are drowned in tears, and grow pallid and wan.

One reading *Al Aaraaf* (1829), *Romance* and *Israfel* (1831), can see that *Fairy-Land* (1831) is of a piece with them. So *Dream-Land* (10:19) of 1844 is in perfect keeping with the spirit of *The Haunted Palace* and *The Conqueror Worm.*

The poet in the first stanza tells of his journey to Dream-Land, and in the last his return home. The route was obscure and lonely, it was beset by evil things. There the Eidolon, Night, reigned on a black throne. He came to this land —

"From an ultimate dim Thule:
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of Space — out of Time."

Study this description of the Land, —

"Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms and caves and Titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the tears that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restfully aspire,
Surging, unto skies of fire;
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead, —
Their still waters, still and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily."

"By the dismal tarns and pools
Where dwell the Ghouls;
By each spot most unholy,
In each nook most melancholy, —
There the traveller meets aghast
Sheeted Memories of the Past:
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
As they pass the wanderer by,
White-robed forms of friends long given,
In agony, to the Earth — and Heaven."

Here we have recalled the sentiment of *Visit of the Dead* and of *The Lake* of 1829. As in *The Lake* it was said, —

"Whose wildering thought could even make
An Eden of that dim lake,"

so *Dream-Land* continues, —

"For the heart whose woes are legion
'T is a peaceful, soothing region;
For the spirit that walks in shadow
'T is — oh, 't is an Eldorado!"

In 1827 he would not live over again his happiest day, his happiest hour: later it was sorrow that it could be "no more;" in *Eulalie* (10: 36) a different note is sounded:

he is redeemed from a world of moan by the bright eyes of the gentle Eulalie, —

"I dwelt alone
In a world of moan,
And my soul was a stagnant tide,
Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing bride.
Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie became my smiling bride,

"Ah, less — less bright
The stars of the night
Than the eyes of the radiant girl!
And never a flake
That the vapor can make
With the moon-tints of purple and pearl
Can vie with the modest Eulalie's most unregarded curl,
Can compare with the bright-eyed Eulalie's most humble and careless curl."

There is no death and no hell in the last stanza, —

"Now doubt — now pain
Come never again,
For her soul gives me sigh for sigh;
And all day long
Shines, bright and strong,
Astarte within the sky,
While ever to her dear Eulalie upturns her matron eye,
While ever to her young Eulalie upturns her violet eye."

The two stanzas *To F——* (10 : 78) are supposed to be to Mrs. Osgood (1 : 70). He calls her "Beloved," and claims that, amid the earnest woes that crowd his drear earthly path, his soul finds solace in dreams of her; and then in lines that recall *To Zante*, he says, —

"And thus thy memory is to me
Like some enchanted far-off isle
In some tumultuous sea, —
Some ocean throbbing far and free
With storms, but where meanwhile
Serenest skies continually
Just o'er that one bright island smile."

Here he has the same sort of consolation as in *Eulalie*. It is not a brooding over the dark past, but a fleeing to —

"An Eden of bland repose."

Poe had, naturally, a Platonic interest in Woman. Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood (W.: 259), a poet, appealed strongly to this side of his nature. He spoke at length and in much detail of her poetry in *The Literati* (8: 95). He said in one place of her: "In character she is ardent, sensitive, impulsive — the very soul of truth and honor; a worshipper of the beautiful, with a heart so radically artless as to seem abundant in art; universally admired, respected, and beloved."

This enables us to appreciate the force of the lines entitled, *To F——s S. O——d* (10: 81), —

"Thou wouldst be loved? — then let thy heart
From its present pathway part not:
Being everything which now thou art,
Be nothing which thou art not.
So with the world thy gentle ways,
Thy grace, thy more than beauty,
Shall be an endless theme of praise,
And love — a simple duty."

Before speaking of *The Raven*, the crowning piece of the edition of 1845, — the crowning glory of his whole career! — let us turn to his prose for a moment to learn how he has specialized the view of poetry expressed in the prefatory letter of the volume of 1831, and what he has to say about the "Idea of Beauty," which, in *Al Aaraaf*, "lit on hills Achaian."

The Poetic Principle (6: 3), though written and delivered as a lecture, was not published till 1850; but the theory of poetry found therein formed a part of his discussion of Longfellow's *Ballads* (6: 120), and was published in 1842.

It would be profitless to discuss here the fallacious claim that "a long poem is a contradiction in terms."

He says: "An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man, is thus, plainly, a sense of the Beautiful. This it is which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odors, and sentiments, amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryllis in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, and sounds, and colors, and odors, and sentiments, a duplicate source of delight. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description of the sights, and sounds, and odors, and colors, and sentiments, which greet *him* in common with all mankind — he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable, to allay which he has not shown us the crystal springs. This thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain to eternity alone.

"And thus when by Poetry — or when by Music, the most entrancing of the Poetic moods — we find ourselves melted into tears, not as the Abbate Gravia supposes through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp now, wholly, here on earth, at once and forever, those divine and rapturous joys, of

which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

"The struggle to apprehend the supernal Loveliness — this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted — has given to the world all that which it (the world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and to feel as poetic."

He says, in short: "I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty.* Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with Conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth."

This strikes one as the prose of *Al Aaraaf.* It is mere theory, but it serves to show that he regarded Beauty not as a quality but as an effect; and that he considered Beauty the sole legitimate province of a poem. Moreover, an obvious rule of Art demanding that effects be made to spring from direct causes brought him to the appreciation of *unity* as the essential principle through which an effect must be directly produced. He illustrated this in his *ex post facto* analysis of *The Raven*, published in 1846, which is his essay on the *Philosophy of Composition.*

Let us turn to *The Raven* first, and afterwards look into this essay.

Unmistakably there is a connection in thought between *Lenore* (10 : 17) and *The Raven.* The first version of *Lenore* was published in 1831, under the title *A Pæan*, which has already been noticed. This first version does not contain the name Lenore, but in the version of 1843 the title becomes *Lenore* (10 : 169). The edition of 1845 is substantially that of 1843. In the first stanza are these two lines, —

"And, Guy De Vere, hast *thou* no tear? — weep now or nevermore!
See, on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!"

In the third stanza these lines, —

"The sweet Lenore hath gone before, with Hope that flew beside,
Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride."

He wafts the angel on her flight, not with a dirge, but with a pæan of old days. The events of *Lenore* would legitimately induce the mental condition out of which *The Raven* grows and flowers.

In *The Raven*, the singer is introduced to us as vainly seeking surcease of sorrow for the lost Lenore, —

"For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."

Towards the close of the poem he says, —

"By that Heaven that bends above us, by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore!"

The simple story of *The Raven*, minus the embellishments of verse that contribute so largely to the weird pleasure of the poem, is interesting. The monologist relates the incidents with the fervor of a heart that has experienced them.

It was upon a dreary midnight in bleak December when, tired out with keeping company with "the spirit of Eld" in quaint volumes of forgotten lore, in which he was trying to find a balm for his heart that had lost the radiant Lenore, that he heard a gentle rapping at his door. Outside it was darkness and the ghostly, dreary wind; inside it was weakness and weariness and the weird shadows of the dying embers upon the floor. It must have been such a night, to him, as a child would know the De'il had business in, he was expectant of something. The rustling of the silken curtains filled him with fantastic terrors, and to calm the tumult of his heart, he kept repeating that the tapping at his chamber door was some

late visitor entreating entrance. He hesitated to open, but soon his soul grew stronger, on thinking that he was, perhaps, half-dreaming, since he was nodding when he heard the first gentle rapping. He opened, but there was darkness, nothing more.

He stood there long, peering deep into the night, full of wonder, fear, and doubt, imagining things no mortal ever dared to dream before, but the silence was unbroken except by the one word he whispered, the name "Lenore": an echo answered back "Lenore."

He returned into his chamber with soul all a-flame. Soon there was the tapping somewhat louder than at first; at the window lattice it seemed to him. A moment's thought led him to conclude it was the wind; but he flung open the shutter, and in there fluttered "a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore," and without ceremony perched upon the bust of Pallas above the chamber door.

The stern decorum of this ebony bird beguiled his sad fancy into smiling, and he asked the ancient Raven what his lordly name was "on the Night's Plutonian shore." His answer was "Nevermore." This recalls the lines on *Silence*, where, of a two-fold silence, "the corporate Silence" is named "No More."

That was a strange spectacle, an ungainly fowl upon the sculptured bust above the door, and with such a name as "Nevermore!" But while he spoke only that one word, he poured out his soul in it. Nothing further was said, not a feather fluttered, so the host scarcely more than whispered to himself, —

> "— 'Other friends have flown before;
> On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before,'
> Then the bird said 'Nevermore.'"

He was startled by this apt reply, and felt that this one word was the bird's only stock and store, —

"Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore:
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never—nevermore.'"

Then he set himself to guess what this ominous bird meant by croaking "Nevermore." While thus engaged, not a syllable he uttered, though the fowl's fiery eyes burned into his heart's core. He reclined against the cushion's velvet lining which, it occurred to him, "*she* shall press, ah, nevermore." With this suggestion dominant he says, —

"Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
'Wretch,' I cried, 'thy God hath lent thee — by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite — respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh, quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!'"

When, from such a revery, he was startled by the Raven's apt and ominous "Nevermore," he conceived the thing to be a prophet, though bird or devil, and said most beseechingly, —

"On this home by Horror haunted — tell me truly, I implore:
Is there — *is* there balm in Gilead? — tell me — tell me, I implore!"

The prompt "Nevermore" dashed the little hope in the midst of despair that he was entertaining. With no balm for his lot here below he urgently asks, —

"Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore;
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore!"

The Raven's "Nevermore" to this ends all in utter despair, and he (the singer) would make it the sign of their parting; but when he says

"Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"

the answer is still, "Nevermore."

"And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor:
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted — nevermore!"

The allegorical element of *The Raven*, of *The Haunted Palace*, of *The Conqueror Worm*, of any other poem, will find a proper place in the discussion of Poe's Art; here, we are considering the mind-content of his poetry.

The Raven is the masterful variation of his theme for which everything else heretofore has been preparatory. It gives us a taste of the luxury of sorrow that is superlatively fine; there is no balm in Gilead for his troubled soul, as he takes his way among mortals here below, and no hope of clasping the rare and radiant Lenore in Heaven.

Aside from the thoughts that make part and parcel of his theme, Poe had thoughts concerning the art of poetry which are to be taken into account. These thoughts are not Poe's art itself, but the theory of that art, and are found in *The Philosophy of Composition* (6:31), where he considers *The Raven* an exemplification of his theory.

He says, "Most writers — poets in especial — prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy — an ecstatic intuition; and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought, at the true purposes, seized only at the last moment, at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view, at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair

as unmanageable, at the cautious selections and rejections, at the painful erasures and interpolations — in a word, at the wheels and pinions, the tackle for scene-shifting, the step-ladders and demon-traps, the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred constitute the properties of the literary *histrio*."

The free, creative, energy of the Art-impulses is limited only by the idea to be wrought out. Otherwise there could not be unity, that prime essential of a work of Art. "It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention."

He claims that the proper beginning of a poem is the consideration of an *effect*. "Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone — whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone — afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect."

After choosing an impression, or effect, to be conveyed, he executes it with the design of making the work *universally* appreciable. To this end Beauty must be held to be "the sole legitimate province of the poem." "That pleasure," he says, "which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect; they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul* — not of intellect or of heart — upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating 'the beautiful.'

Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes — that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment — no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is *most readily* attained in the poem."

"Regarding, then Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation; and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness.* Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones."

In connection with his discussion of "Nevermore" as monotonous and the most suitable refrain for a poem of melancholy tone, he asked himself: "'Of all melancholy topics, what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?' Death — was the obvious reply. 'And when is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?' When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty;* the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world — and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such a topic are those of a bereaved lover."

Combining the idea of a lover sorrowing for his deceased mistress with that of a Raven uttering the monotonous "Nevermore," the effect sought is obtained. He speaks significantly of this in these words: "The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, 'Nevermore' — a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of 'Nevermore.' The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before ex-

plained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer 'Nevermore.'

"With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real."

"The luxury of sorrow," "Self-torture," are the key-words to Poe's — every man's — pessimism.

Poe's attitude, intellectually at least, towards Beauty in 1845 is quite different from that of 1827. Beauty, now, is not a quality, but an effect, and poetry is the means by which it is produced. "Poetry in words is the rhythmical creation of beauty." However much of passion, of duty, or of truth, may be introduced, incidentally and with advantage, into a poem, "Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem." Such a view of Beauty and Poetry calls attention to the importance of *Workmanship*, — in the rhythmical use of words to create beauty. Between a poetical conception as it stands in the poet's mind and its finished expression in the concrete form of verse, there is, so to speak, the workman in his shop with material and tools. Poe meant, evidently, by his analysis of *The Raven* to give us this view of the workman, and to indicate thereby the true method of interpreting a piece of Art. What is the infallible test of a true poem? In a word, its *self*-consistency. Not by anything outside of itself can its worth as a work of Art be determined. A true poem realizes a definite effect, and must, perforce, be self-consistent.

While we are, seemingly, taken into Poe's confidence as to the composition of *The Raven*, and while it is doubtful if he went through with any such ratiocinative process in

the detail he sets forth, still he thus convinces us that he is an artist, knowing how to work to secure the essential qualities, unity, harmony, and completeness, of high Art. A constant reviser of his verse, he came to know "the trick of the tool's true play." Poe's discussion of *The Raven* is his avowal of his faith in himself as both poet and artist.

CHAPTER VI

HIS METHOD

POE had done his best in *The Raven.* After 1845 "Disaster followed fast and followed faster," yet his career in verse till the end is interesting.

The spring of 1846 found him at Fordham Cottage, broken in health, with Virginia doomed to an early death. A distressing tale is that which is told of their destitution (1: 73; W. 271). Mrs. Maria Louise Shew was their good angel. After Virginia's death, January 30, 1847, until June of the same year, she charged herself with Poe's mental and bodily welfare (1 : 78). It was out of gratitude and devotion to her that he wrote the lines entitled *To M. L. S.* (10 : 88).

He blesses her —

> "For the resurrection of deep-buried faith
> In truth, in virtue, in humanity;"

and says, —

> "Of all who owe thee most, whose gratitude
> Nearest resembles worship, oh, remember
> The truest, the most fervently devoted,
> And think that these weak lines are written by him."

About a year later, when his gratitude to Mrs. Shew had grown into sentimentality, the widower poet wrote the lines, *To* —— —— (10 : 89 and 194).

They run thus, —

"Not long ago the writer of these lines,
In the mad pride of intellectuality,
Maintained 'the power of words' — denied that ever
A thought arose within the human brain
Beyond the utterance of the human tongue:
And now, as if in mockery of that boast,
Two words, two foreign soft dissyllables,
Italian tones, made only to be murmured
By angels dreaming in the moonlit 'dew
That hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill,'
Have stirred from out the abysses of his heart
Unthought-like thoughts, that are the souls of thought, —
Richer, far wilder, far diviner visions
Than even the seraph harper, Israfel
(Who has 'the sweetest voice of all God's creatures'),
Could hope to utter."

Then he speaks of her dear name which he cannot write, cannot think, cannot feel, —

— "For 't is not feeling, —
This standing motionless upon the golden
Threshold of the wide-open gate of dreams,
Gazing entranced adown the gorgeous vista,
And thrilling as I see, upon the right,
Upon the left, and all the way along,
Amid empurpled vapors, far away
To where the prospect terminates — thee only."

"Mrs. Shew, finding her protégé was too irresponsible and too romantic to be allowed such freedom with her as he had been accustomed to, broke off the acquaintance" (W. 305).

The next woman to come in for his admiration was Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman (1 : 79 ; W. 308). *To Helen* (10 : 84) are lines written to her — to her eyes! — as,

"Save only the divine light in thine eyes,
Save but the soul in thine uplifted eyes:
I saw but them — they were the world to me:

I saw but them, saw only them for hours,
Saw only them, until the moon went down.
What wild heart-histories seemed to lie enwritten
Upon those crystalline, celestial spheres;
How dark a woe, yet how sublime a hope;
How silently serene a sea of pride;
How daring an ambition; yet how deep,
How fathomless a capacity for love!"

His next love was the woman known in his poems as "Annie" (1: 79; W. 314). The verses entitled *For Annie* (10: 90) exhibit a singular conception.

The fever called "Living" is at last conquered, and he is at rest, stretched at full length, composedly, on his bed. You would start at beholding him, thinking him dead.

"And oh! of all tortures,
That torture the worst
Has abated — the terrible
Torture of thirst
For the napthaline river
Of Passion accurst:
I have drank of a water
That quenches all thirst:

"Of a water that flows
With a lullaby sound,
From a spring but a very few
Feet under ground,
From a cavern not far
Down under ground."

He says further, —

"And, *to sleep*, you must slumber
In just such a bed."

And then about his tantalized spirit he sings, —

"And so it lies happily,
Bathing in many
A dream of the truth

And the beauty of Annie,
Drowned in a bath
Of the tresses of Annie.

. . . . . .

"When the light was extinguished,
She covered me warm,
And she prayed to the angels
To keep me from harm,
To the queen of the angels
To shield me from harm.

"And I lie so composedly
Now, in my bed,
(Knowing her love)
That you fancy me dead;
And I rest so contentedly
Now, in my bed,
(With her love at my breast)
That you fancy me dead,
That you shudder to look at me,
Thinking me dead.

"But my heart it is brighter
Than all of the many
Stars in the sky,
For it sparkles with Annie:
It glows with the light
Of the love of my Annie,
With the thought of the light
Of the eyes of my Annie."

One can easily imagine that this poem is the sequel, in sentiment, of *Eldorado* (10 : 35), —

"Gayly bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado."

He grew old in the quest; his strength failed him; he met a pilgrim shadow of whom he asked —

"'Where can it be,
This land of Eldorado?'

"'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,
'If you seek for Eldorado!'"

The sonnet, *An Enigma* (10:83), to Mrs. Lewis, another poetess of New York (1:83), and *A Valentine* (10:82) to Mrs. Osgood, conclude the sum of his vaporing sentimentality towards women of poetical sensibilities.

After all this it is pleasant to be assured in the lines, *To My Mother* (10:94), of the sanity of the poet's affection for his wife and her mother.

"Because I feel that, in the Heavens above,
The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find among their burning terms of love
None so devotional as that of 'Mother,'
Therefore by that dear name I long have called you —
You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.
My mother, my own mother, who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life."

Of the poems after 1845 there remain three, *Ulalume*, *Annabel Lee*, *The Bells*, to be considered, in which his genius was not wrought awry by the sentimentality at which we have been glancing.

Ulalume (10 : 43) is allegorical. In a walk and a talk with his soul he comes upon the tomb of his lost Ulalume. He recalls that —

"Here once, through an alley Titanic
Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul —
Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.
These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll,
As the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole,
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
In the realms of the boreal pole."

But at the time, their thoughts were so serious and palsied and sere that they knew not that it was the month of October, and marked not the night of the year, nor noted the dim lake, nor remembered the ghoul-haunted woodland.

As the night waned and the star-dials pointed to morn, they saw at the end of their path a nebulous lustre which took the form of Astarte's bediamonded crescent. He felt that she was warmer than Dian, and had come to point them to the Lethean peace of the skies, —

"But Psyche, uplifting her finger,
Said — 'Sadly this star I mistrust,
Her pallor I strangely mistrust:
Oh, hasten! — oh, let us not linger!
Oh, fly! — let us fly! — for we must.'
In terror she spoke, letting sink her
Wings until they trailed in the dust;
In agony sobbed, letting sink her
Plumes till they trailed in the dust,
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust."

He then tried to comfort Psyche with the thought that her fears were but dreaming, and that they might trust to this sibyllic splendor to guide them aright.

"Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
And tempted her out of her gloom,
And conquered her scruples and gloom,
And we passed to the end of the vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb,
By the door of a legended tomb;
And I said — 'What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb?'
She replied — 'Ulalume — Ulalume —
'T is the vault of thy lost Ulalume!'"

Then it was that his heart grew ashen and sober as the withered and crisped leaves, and he cried,

—— "It was surely October
On this very night of last year
That I journeyed — I journeyed down here,
That I brought a dread burden down here:
On this night of all nights in the year,
Ah, what demon has tempted me here?
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber,
This misty mid region of Weir:
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,
This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir."

This is but another variation of his one theme. It is cast in the form of a recollection. It is easy to imagine that the second stanza depicts his mental state in the troublous experiences of 1847 (W. 260–277; 1:73).

"These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll,
As the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek."

Under Mrs. Shew's kindly care he at length recovered (W. 278), and therewith felt more than a friendly interest in Mrs. Shew. This interest we may think is represented in the poem by the "nebulous lustre" out of which arose "Astarte's bediamonded crescent," and which lured him,

for a while, to forget his sorrow so far as to become enamoured of Mrs. Shew. It came to that pass in June, 1847, that she had to break with him.

Then he was recalled to himself, or was stopped by the door of a tomb, the vault of his lost Ulalume.

Ulalume was published in December, 1847

In 1848 *The Rationale of Verse* (6 : 47) was published, in which he sets forth his theory of the technique of verse. He begins with the origin of verse, thus: "*Verse* originates in the human enjoyment of equality, fitness. To this enjoyment, also, all the moods of verse — rhythm, meter, stanza, rhyme, alliteration, the *refrain*, and other analogous effects — are to be referred."

This seems as much to be an after-consideration, as his analysis of *The Raven;* for we had the repetend in *Eulalie* and *Lenore*, and the repetend and refrain in *The Raven*, all of 1845, and the extreme of this technical side in *Ulalume*. In fact, *The Philosophy of Composition of Verse* and *The Rationale of Verse* are Poe's ratiocinations as to his poetry in both its inner and outer form.

In *Tamerlane* he speaks of a love "such as angel minds above might envy." In *Annabel Lee* (10 : 41) he celebrates a love that is "more than love." He and Annabel Lee loved

> "With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
> Coveted her and me."
>
> "And this was the reason that, long ago,
> In this kingdom by the sea,
> A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
> My beautiful Annabel Lee."
>
> "The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
> Went envying her and me."
>
> "But our love it was stronger by far than the love
> Of those who were older than we,
> Of many far wiser than we;

And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling — my darling — my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea."

This comes nigh to excess of sentiment in the treatment of his most poetical of all topics, namely, the death of a beautiful woman on the lips of a bereaved lover.

In *The Bells* (10 : 37) Poe puts aside his usual theme as if on purpose to give us proof of his skill in onomatopeia. In the prefatory letter of 1831 he had distinguished poetry from romance by saying that it presented perceptible images with *in*definite sensations, to which end music was essential, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. This is, perhaps, his conclusion after a discursive consideration of the charming lyrics of *Al Aaraaf* (1829), as, evidently, *The Philosophy of Composition* was the out-come of a like consideration of *The Raven*. The term "music" with Poe means *melody*, and *onomatopeia* will cover, broadly, the artifice of his verse.

"Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells
Through the balmy air of night
How they ring out their delight!
From the molten-golden notes,
And all in tune,
What a liquid ditty floats

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To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!
Oh, from out the sounding cells,
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
How it swells!
How it dwells
On the Future! how it tells
Of the rapture that impels
To the swing and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells, —
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!"

After this pattern are the "silver bells," the "brazen bells," the "iron bells," rung to evoke the sentiments, respectively, of merriment, of terror, and of solemnity.

There may be some question as to the occasion of the composition of *The Bells* (W. 302), but to him who has had his ear, in youth, attuned to the plantation melodies of the South, there can be no doubt as to the source of this onomatopoetic element of Poe's poetry. This it is, despite his narrow range, that makes him distinctively an American poet. Another poet, however, with "passion for exact truth," complained that "The trouble with Poe was, he did not *know* enough;" yet this poet sang, —

"'The time needs heart — 't is tired of head:
We 're all for love,' the violins said."

He it was who took from this same negro minstrelsy his cue for that capital book, *The Science of English Verse*.

It may at first thought appear a little strange that Poe should insist upon *Eureka's* (9 : 5) being called a poem, urging as a reason the beauty of the truth in which it abounds, but it should be remembered that it has the title, *Eureka: A Prose Poem.* In the same sense, *The Philosophy of Composition* is a *prose* poem, — the prose of

The Raven. The truth of his ratiocination in the essay has a beautiful exemplification in the poem.

Nature — the Universe — was to Poe a poem as *Al Aaraaf*, in particular, attests, and as in *The Philosophy of Composition* he begins, with a beginning, from which he shows the self-consistency in *The Raven* that entitles it to rank as a piece of Art; so, in like manner, he discusses the Universe, except that his ratiocination is wholly speculative. He feels though that he has found the truth, from these words of his Preface: "*What I here propound is true:* — therefore it cannot die; or if by any means it be now trodden down so that it die, it will 'rise again to the Life Everlasting.'" But in the very last line of the Preface he says, "Nevertheless, it is as a Poem only that I wish this work to be judged after I am dead," which means that it is as a self-consistent system of thought that he would have it passed upon. The first lines of his Preface make this clear: "To the few who love me and whom I love — to those who feel rather than to those who think — to the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams as in the only realties — I offer this book of Truths, not in its character of Truth-Teller, but for the Beauty that abounds in its Truth, constituting it true." While he thinks he has taken, of all the *roads* to Truth, "the broadest, the straightest, and most available . . . — the majestic highway of the *Consistent*," yet he means to ask us not to question the truth of his premises. His desire is that we enjoy this as the prose of that cosmogonic poem written by the God and Father of us all in the facts of our Universe.

CHAPTER VII

RÉSUMÉ

IT seems good at this point to call attention again to the fact that the attitude of the critic towards a poet and his poetry determines the results of his study. If he bring with him some foot-rule of Taste with which to measure, his opinions will be judicial, charged, as a rule, with excess of blame, rarely with excess of praise.

It is one thing to study a fact in its relation to other facts, for the sake of classification, gaining thereby, according to the logical scheme, *clearness* of knowledge; it is quite another thing to study the same fact in itself, apart from other facts, in order to get *distinctness* of knowledge. The one enables us to say, merely, what a thing is not; the other, by separating it from an embarrassing variety, enables us to know, positively, what the thing is.

Think what you may of this procedure from a logical or scientific point of view, it is the especial prerogative of Art to disentangle the individual from the crowd in order to interest us in the individual. To illustrate: Who has read Lowell's *Dandelion*, can ever again think of it as a weed to be plucked up and to be rid of? It is a "dear common flower," and "fringes the dusty road with harmless gold!"

Poe stands out from the crowd through the uniqueness of his genius; he challenges at once the interest of the

lover of letters. Lowell presents him in a rather grotesque way, —

> "There comes Poe with his Raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
> Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge."

It has been with somewhat whimsical intention of enjoying what Poe *felt* as a poet and *thought* about its expression, that we have followed him thus, and thus far. Now we may gather up into more definite compass the mental content of the poet.

The pronominal personage of the edition of 1827 has the passion and the sense of fatality that belongs to genius. It is Poe's early gratulatory recognition of himself. The primary end of this verse is to interest us in the gifted but ill-fated young man. Incidentally with the poetry we have a deal of instruction as to what genius is and how it behaves itself. Thus early we get a hint of the discursive power of Poe's mind.

Genius feels the silent tone of its self-supremacy; claims by innate right a mystic empire and high power; knows the fate it will inherit, yet finds pride the ruler of its will; discriminates in favor of the poet's dreams against the dull realities of waking life; not of the commonalty, he has nevertheless a token of what in other worlds shall be, given in beauty: isolated thus by natural endowments, he lives alone, in a world of moan. He is a Platonist and yet pessimistic in tone. He revels in dreams of living light and loveliness; he leaves his heart in climes of his own imagining, apart with beings of his own thought.

While *Genius*, ratiocinatively considered, is theme of the volume of 1827, it is Genius luxuriating in sorrow that is the poetical conception as it was in Poe's mind. This young genius, though, is presented as being in alliance with Beauty, for solace, — having revelations through Beauty that saves him to life and Heaven.

One feels that Poe, in the edition of 1829, speaks in his own proper person. He has had, in the person of Young Genius, visions of beauty, but he is disenchanted now; they have "faded into the light of common day." The years of dreaming are past, the day of reflection has come. The scientific, or critical, spirit preys upon his heart. He turns to that Beauty through which he had tokens of other worlds. *Beauty* thus becomes the theme of this volume.

This new direction of thought finds its poetical expression, after the very method, spirit, and doctrine of Plato, in the mythus, *Al Aaraaf*. "The Idea of Beauty" becomes his inspiration. In the lines to the maiden Ligeia, he celebrates his *thought* as to Harmony, that great essential of Beauty, and exemplifies it at the same time in the verse, —

> "Ligeia! Ligeia!
> My beautiful one!
> Whose harshest idea
> Will to melody run."

That is the thought: transforming the harshest idea into melody. This very lyric is melody itself. Poe here lights upon his *forte* in the way of technique, namely, the harmony of sense and expression. The lyrics of his *Al Aaraaf* are characteristic of his best verse.

The *thought* of the volume of 1831 is about Poetry. In his prefatory letter he speaks of rejecting all but a small portion of his former volume, considering little else but *Al Aaraaf* and *Tamerlane* worth a second edition. He finds occasion for defining poetry as perceptible images giving indefinite sensations through association with music.

The poet is poetically conceived as a spirit "whose heartstrings are a lute." An unimpassioned song is despised.

> "The ecstasies above
> With thy burning measures suit:
> Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
> With the fervor of thy lute."

Enamored of the idea of Beauty, as in *Al Aaraaf*, and later, of Beauty that is classic, as in stanzas to Helen (10 : 77), *Israfel* seems the most natural, logical, sequent. The lines above suggest Poe's theory of poetry that expression and sentiment should agree.

Poe, in the lines, *To the River* (1829), conceived under the aptest of figures the effect of Beauty upon the observer, and therewith suggested that Beauty is an entity, manifesting itself through concrete forms. In 1831 Beauty is lord; the poet is passive: after 1831 the poet is conceived as the creator of Beauty, that is, he is an artist, consciously working to produce an effect, to wit, the pleasurable sense of the Beautiful. Means and methods come to view. Workmanship becomes a prime consideration.

If Poe had not persuaded us of this in his analysis of *The Raven*, it were discoverable in the half dozen best poems of the edition of 1845, where his use of allegory and his verbal artifices for the sake of melody stand in evidence. What before this had cropped out, in his happiest instances, as predilections, have become, in a sense, working rules.

Though Poe claimed that poetry was with him a passion, he yet disclaimed that he could dash off a poem in a frenzy. After he had thought of the modus of his mind's play in the composition of *The Raven*, he discovered he had a method, which was to choose, first, the effect to be produced; this effect, in turn, determined the choice of a poetical topic as well as the treatment of that topic. "Onomatopoetic" describes the technical handling of the topic.

One can almost imagine that *The Bells* is his own exultant exhibition of his skill in onomatopeia. For a display of

simple onomatopeia he might have found something that gave out *noises*, as "How the Water Comes down at Lodore," but his finer instinct which had listened to "the music of the spheres" sought its satisfaction in the *tones* of bells.

PART SECOND

THE ART OF POE'S POETRY

CHAPTER I

IN THE WORKSHOP

WE have attempted to trace the circle that circumscribes Poe's thoughts *in* (his), and *about* (his), poetry. A certain narrow range of sentiments makes up what may be called the topical side of this poetry, while certain other opinions — theories — belong to the technical side. It is now the handling of his theme — his workmanship — that is to claim our attention. The question is, Did Poe's sentiments find their own proper expression? Did the body take the form of the soul?

As Poe *grew* into the mastery of his art, our study begins, properly, with a comparison of the *Tamerlane* of 1827 with the revised *Tamerlane* of 1829. The revision may be characterized, in part and whole, as an exercise in rhetorical condensation. The episode of his stealing away from his Ada's matted bower, one bright summer's day, to follow his fortune in the strife of nations, is omitted from the edition of 1829. The name "Ada" is dropped, and there is less objective personal interest, and consequently less spontaneity.

The poem of 1827 ends with Tamerlane's return to find his home a home no more, as if the proper theme were the

love-story. This story is only an incident. The real theme might be expressed in some such title as this, "Tamerlane: A Victim of Fate." It was no doubt some ratiocination of this sort that revealed to Poe that the poem was unfinished, and caused him to add this stanza, —

> "Father, I firmly do believe —
> I *know*, for Death, who comes for me
> From regions of the blest afar
> Where there is nothing to deceive,
> Hath left his iron gate ajar,
> And rays of truth you cannot see
> Are flashing through Eternity —
> I do believe that Eblis hath
> A snare in every human path;
> Else how, when in the holy grove
> I wandered of the idol, Love,
> Who daily scents his snowy wings
> With incense of burnt offerings
> From the most unpolluted things,
> Whose pleasant bowers are yet so riven
> Above with trellised rays from Heaven
> No mote may shun, no tiniest fly,
> The lightning of his eagle eye, —
> How was it that ambition crept,
> Unseen, amid the revels there,
> Till, growing bold, he laughed and leapt
> In the tangles of Love's very hair?"

This brings us back to the notion with which we set out. It makes a circle of dependencies. There is thus a manifest growth in his appreciation of the *unity* and the *completeness* of thought essential to a true poem. So while there is loss in the lyrical, or spontaneous, element, there is gain in what is fundamental to the organic interdependence of a work of Art.

As to the poem by parts, let us set side by side, stanzas from the two editions.

The first stanza, or paragraph, of 1827 reads, —

"I have sent for thee, holy friar;
But 't was not with the drunken hope,
Which is but agony of desire
To shun the fate, with which to cope
Is more than crime may dare to dream,
That I have call'd thee at this hour:
Such, father, is not my theme —
Nor am I mad, to deem that power
Of earth may shrive me of the sin
Unearthly pride hath revell'd in —
I would not call thee fool, old man,
But hope is not a gift of thine;
If I *can* hope (O God! I can)
It falls from an eternal shrine."

This stanza revised runs thus, —

"Kind solace in a dying hour!
Such, father, is not (now) my theme;
I will not madly deem that power
Of Earth may shrive me of the sin
Unearthly pride hath revelled in;
I have no time to dote or dream.
You call it hope — that fire of fire!
It is but agony of desire;
If I *can* hope — O God! I can —
Its fount is holier, more divine;
I would not call thee fool, old man,
But such is not a gift of thine."

The stanza in which he relates how they grew in age and love together, how his breast was her shield in wintry weather, and how her smiles were friendly sunshine, how he saw no Heaven but in her eyes, — this stanza shows less change in the revision. This same stanza in 1827, however, has an after-part of telling appropriateness in sentiment. The lines read thus, —

> "The hallow'd memory of those years
> Comes o'er me in these lonely hours,
> And, with sweet loveliness, appears
> As perfume of strange summer flowers;
> Of flowers which we have known before
> In infancy, which seen, recall
> To mind — not flowers alone — but more,
> Our earthly life, and love — and all."

These lines are omitted in 1829, and clearly because they are considered redundant both in thought and sentiment to the stanza to which they are added, but they very aptly link the sentiment of the stanza to the general theme by recalling the situation depicted in the first stanza of the poem. They do for the middle of the poem what the last paragraph in the edition of 1829 does, that of binding back that part of the poem to the beginning. In short, the difference between the *Tamerlane* of 1827 and the *Tamerlane* of 1829 is the difference between the charming nonchalance of the loose sentence and the rather prim circumspection of the periodic.

Having given, in the first instance, due attention to the theme and its topic, Poe, in the revised *Tamerlane*, shows an intense interest in the technique of the poem. He may be interpreted as avowing thereby that material is, in a sense, insignificant, and that workmanship is all-important. We can conceive him having some such motto as *Materiam opus superabat*. He could tell you that a low grade of workmanship might make of a block marble, a passable gate-post, but that artistic skill could give it the infinite worth of a Venus of Milo. Poe was alive to the fact that, in matters of Art, our spring of interest is in a workmanship that glorifies the artist.

Whatever the revisions found in the volume of 1829 exhibit, Poe gives us in the same volume some new creations

in which there is more competent evidence of his artistic skill. Apparently at one effort he wrote the sonnet, *To Science*. One needs merely to know the demands of the sonnet as a form of verse to appreciate fully Poe's success. The essentials for which he labored in revising *Tamerlane* are conspicuous in this sonnet. There is a single sentiment expressed in the most consonant terms.

He resents the iconoclastic spirit of science. He begins with the exclamation, "Science!" as if he recognized an appeal to his discursive ability. He calls science a true daughter of Old Time, because she is meddlesome, peering about with her eyes, altering all things. She is a vulture that preys upon the poet's heart. He cannot love her because she is not content to leave him to seek his treasure in the jewelled skies. She would make fictions of his eternal verities. She would break down his idols, and leave him disconsolate in a world of dull realities.

The simple adequateness of the express form to the sentiment is remarkable, and the connotation of the verbal terms is "beyond compare." Be it remembered that it is aside from our purpose to ask if the rime-scheme be Petrarchian or English, that knowledge would not effect its inherent worth. How does the concrete form stand to the sentiment? A careful study will challenge the most audacious critic "to gild refined gold" by suggesting emendations.

So much cannot be said in praise of *Al Aaraaf*, taken as a whole: it is a case in which a part is greater than the whole.

The lyric to Ligeia is the first exemplification of Poe's doctrine that the pleasure of poetry resides in the *in*definite *sensations* produced by the association of music with perceptible images. This theory was not, however, put into prose till later, — in the prefatory letter of 1831.

This lyric is the first conspicuous instance of Poe's individual artistic skill. The sonnet to Science ranks him as a poet-artist; this song suggests his *differentia*.

Suppose we glance at the round of perceptible images in the song. We should remember that we are in Nesace's realm of "bright beings." She calls them to leave tenantless their crystal home to fly with her across the moony sky to other worlds.

Ligeia is one of the "spirits in wing." Will she toss on the breezes, or, incumbent on night, like the lone albatross, be capriciously still to watch with delight the harmony there?

Is that not a charming picture? A creature so beautiful (in soul) that her harshest idea runs to melody! See her toss on the breezes to the music of the spheres! Picture her *capriciously* still! It is the harmony she is watching with delight!

The picturesque element is suggestive of harmony: we ideate harmony personified. But apart from this the mere word-and-letter element affords us experimentally a sense of harmony in the concord of sweet sounds. If we read the words without voice, the vocal organs mutely enjoy the rhythm, but it is most natural to break out singing them. What more can be said in praise of his art?

The maiden's name, "Ligeia," begins with the liquid of liquids.

> "Ligeia! Ligeia!
> My beautiful one!"

Repeat "Ligeia" with the rising inflection, then pause a moment for the liquid tones of the name to flow into and through your soul. After that how aptly does "My beautiful one!" flow from the lips!

> "Whose harshest idea
> Will to melody run."

See how the onomatopoetic effect of the word "harshest" is neutralized by the word that comes before and the word that follows, making thereby a melodious line. The simple letter-combination in this line exemplifies the thought of the two lines.

Here is enough of detail to show that the soul of the thought — the sentiment — informs the body to the very fibre. Such work is the product of the creative imagination.

Ligeia is the guardian of the harmony there. Is she loth to leave? Go she must with the other bright inhabitants, but Nesace assures her that no magic shall ever dissever her music from her image. She is commissioned to go wake "many a maid" asleep on moorland and lea. Note how she is to do it, —

> "Go! breathe on their slumber,
> All softly in ear,
> The musical number
> They slumbered to hear;
> For what can awaken
> An angel so soon,
> Whose sleep hath been taken
> Beneath the cold moon,
> As the spell which no slumber
> Of witchery may test, —
> The rhythmical number
> Which lulled him to rest?"

Here we have the same wonderful adaptation of expression to sentiment. It is interesting to note how perfectly this ending consists with the beginning. Ligeia is introduced to us as the vigilant guardian of harmony in that realm. She has bound many eyes in a dreamy sleep; but she is now to awaken the fair maidens with their musical numbers. She is to "*breathe*" on their slumbers. Could Ligeia do anything but "breathe" these notes? It would

not be her nature to *whisper*. Pronounce the word "breathe." Nothing explosive — discordant — about it! Think of its office as from her lips it steals all softly in ear. It awakens from sleep as a spell which no slumber of witchery may test. Ligeia could be "capriciously still," but could dissolve the "slumber of witchery." What a subtle connection of thought is here suggested! All and in all and through all may be traced the (hidden?) soul of harmony.

The theme of *Al Aaaraf* is Beauty, and the topic of the song to Ligeia is Harmony; it is not the beauty that is inherent in the theme, nor the harmony that belongs by nature to the topic; but it is the beauty that comes from the harmony in the handling of theme and topic, that we seek. It is "the glow of beauty," —

> "the unhidden heart,
> The playful maziness of art,"

for which Poe found a most appropriate emblem, namely, a fair river, bright, a clear flow of crystal, wandering water. Dwell upon the elements of this picture. The concrete form of beauty must be clear as crystal, a perfect mirror; it must be rhythmical as suggested so subtly in "wandering water."

Let beauty gaze into its wave: it glistens, it trembles, it lives, —

> "The prettiest of brooks
> Her worshipper resembles."

Beauty gives life to form, and form worships beauty, —

> "For in his heart, as in thy stream,
> Her image deeply lies —
> His heart which trembles at the beam
> Of her soul-searching eyes."

It is one thing to have prosy notions about the relation of science to poetry, and quite another to make poetry in

the expression of them; it is one thing to think didactically of the interworking of the body and soul in Art, but altogether a different thing to set forth conclusions in harmonious numbers.

In the edition of 1829, Poe demonstrates that he is a creator of Beauty. It is a mistake to think he must have a story of passionate love, as in *Tamerlane*, for material; for his protest against the intentions of science has the genuine poetic fervor; and what others trudge to, discursively, stands out to him in some symbol of beauty, charming to contemplate. It is through his artistic workmanship that he, thus early, proves his divine right to the laurel.

CHAPTER II

EXPERIMENT IN RHYTHM AND RIME

POE had found the cunning of his hand in the work of the volume of 1829. By the time he was ready to publish the edition of 1831, he realized that but little of all that had gone before was worthy of another edition. He inserts whole lines and even passages from the omitted minor poems into the poems retained and included in the new volume. Conspicuously is this the case with *Tamerlane* where an insertion disrupts the unity of the *Tamerlane* of 1829. This procedure indicates a somewhat desperate depreciation of his apprentice-work in favor of a conviction that he possessed a surer and finer skill. The critical and dogmatical spirit of his prefatory letter corroborates this view.

But, strange to think, the volume of 1831 is disappointing. None of its new pieces but undergo significant changes for the edition of 1845. We must, therefore, pass to their revised forms for any profitable study.

Two of these challenge a first consideration, because they are connected in thought with the *Al Aaraaf* of 1829. They make the most natural transition to the volume of 1831, as also to the remoter edition of 1845. The theme of invocation, *To Helen*, is Beauty, but the conception is more concrete, more definite, in its expression, than the "idea of Beauty" in *Al Aaraaf*. One can imagine it to be an apology for the vagaries of *Al Aaraaf*. The other

poem is Israfel, which connects itself in a like way with "Ligeia."

That, the lines to Helen, is a highly poetical way in which to express a final thought on Beauty and Art, and the consequent gratification. Helen's beauty is like a bark upon a perfumed sea, gently bearing a weary wayworn voyager, long wont to roaming on desperate seas, to his own native shore. What a wealth of suggestion! There is the rhythm of gently flowing water put in contrast with desperate seas, that is to be imagined and enjoyed. More particularly: her classic face, her hyacinth hair, her Naiad airs, bring him home —

> "To the glory that was Greece
> And the grandeur that was Rome."

The sensuous side of beauty is here suggested as against the "mere nothing of a name" in Nesace, or Ligeia.

When he enters home, his eyes fall upon the figure of Psyche in a window-niche, and with rapture he exclaims,

> "Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
> Are Holy Land!"

The more prosaic intention of these pictures is to maintain that beauty is a something to be embodied, that although Psyche stands "statue-like" she is more than marble, a living entity, and that she comes from regions which are Holy Land.

But who has the prerogative to transport her hither? In other words, who can sing "divine ideas here below"? Israfel is the type. In contrast with Ligeia, whose harshest idea to melody runs, we have the more concrete suggestion of a spirit "whose heart-strings are a lute."

It is most happy to conceive Israfel as an angel, for then it strikes one as less exaggeration to say that the giddy stars attend the spell all mute, and that the tottering moon,

enamored, blushes with love, and that the red lightning, with the rapid Pleiads, pause in heaven; that the starry choir say —

> "That Israfeli's fire
> Is owing to that lyre
> By which he sits and sings,
> The trembling living wire
> Of those unusual strings."

What a power there is in his notes! The stars turn giddy, the moon totters, all listening things are mute that is a music sweeter than the music of the spheres. It is the creative harmony that Dryden celebrated in his ode to Saint Cecilia, which begins with —

> "From harmony, heavenly harmony,
> This universal frame began."

While the starry choir say that his charm is due to those unusual strings, the mortal poet says that the angel treads the skies —

> "Where deep thoughts are a duty,
> Where Love 's a grown-up God,"

therefore to him the laurels belong, —

> "Best bard, because the wisest."

This explains the concord of the ecstasies above with the burning measures of the angel's lute, and his consequent power. Yes, but Heaven is the angel's home, while the poet's sojourn is in this world of sweets and sours; the shadow of the perfect bliss up there is the sunshine down here. Could the angel exchange places with the poet and sing so wildly well a mortal melody? A bolder note might swell from the poet's lyre towards the sky. This is a sly — poetical — way of exalting the poet above the angel, as did Dryden when he wrote, —

"But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher ;
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard, and straight appear'd,
Mistaking earth for heaven."

Thus we have passed in review the rich sequence of perceptible images that constitute this poem. What a Golconda for the imagination! There are treasures to be revelled in, but not to be reckoned. This procession of pictures keeps step with the rhythm and the rime. Would you test the effect of the music of the verse? Take in, first, sharply defined, the images of a stanza, then read for the verbal rhythm, and there will come the delightful sense of being lapped in soft pensive airs. Pictures and music! Pictures to music!

With the exception of *Lenore*, it would profit naught to speak in particular of the revised forms of the poems of 1831, because the changes in them indicate nothing new for his art.

If you should try, first, for yourself, to fix the boundaries and physical aspects of Fairy-Land, and then read Poe's poem, you will be impressed with the skill which has given definite feature, for the instant, to that ever dissolving realm of fancy. He is all the more an artist that he can be "Fancy's child" too.

You may recall descriptions of Death, and the Dominions of Hell, from Epic verse ; but you should read *The City in the Sea*, because it is unique, ethereal, and subjective. The art of it is a marvel. It is a crowd of contradictory ideas that is hurried upon our mental eye.

It is a strange city ; it is alone, and far down in the dim west; it is deserted, for long ago all that dwelt there went to their eternal rest; there are shrines there, and palaces, and towers, — "Time-eaten towers that tremble not." It must be strange indeed, for these things resem-

ble nothing that is ours. How can we conceive them? This city is in the sea, but there are no winds to ruffle the melancholy waters. No ray from the holy heaven has pierced through the long night-time of that town, but there is light there. No winds, but the light streams up from the lurid sea; silently it gleams up the long-forgotten turrets, and pinnacles, and spires,—

> "So blend the turrets and shadows there
> That all seem pendulous in air,
> While from a proud tower in the town
> Death looks gigantically down."

All is held "pendulous in air" till we are reminded that no ripples curl the waters, and no swellings tell of winds on far-off happier seas; then there is a stir in the air, a movement, and the city settles down, down, amid no earthly moans, into the waves that have now a redder glow.

The same interest in subtle and mysterious analogies is to be found in *The Sleeper* (*Irene*, 1831).

Lenore, which is *A Pæan* of 1831 and *Lenore* of 1843 (10 : 169), shows greater transformation than the *Tamerlane* of 1829.

The first two stanzas of *A Pæan* run thus,—

> "How shall the burial rite be read?
> The solemn song be sung?
> The requiem for the loveliest dead
> That ever died so young?
>
> "Her friends are gazing on her,
> And on her gaudy bier,
> And weep! — oh! to dishonor
> Dead beauty with a tear!"

Compare with this the first stanza of the version of 1843,—

" Ah, broken is the golden bowl!
The spirit flown forever!
Let the bell toll! — A saintly soul
Glides down the Stygian river!
And let the burial rite be read —
The funeral song be sung —
A dirge for the most lovely dead!
That ever died so young!
And, Guy De Vere,
Hast *thou* no tear?
Weep now or nevermore!
See, on yon drear
And rigid bier,
Low lies thy love Lenore! "

And with this the first stanza of the version of 1845, —

" Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown forever!
Let the bell toll! — a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river;
And, Guy De Vere, hast *thou* no tear? — weep now or nevermore!
See, on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!
Come, let the burial rite be read — the funeral song be sung:
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young,
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young."

Here one can test what effect the form of the verse upon the page as presented to the eye has upon the reading. A stanza of irregular and choppy lines suggests, in its bulk to the eye, a somewhat spasmodic, or jerky, movement, and the vocal organs are disposed accordingly, before the lips have enunciated a single word. This has been verified in every observant reader's experience.

Why is the form of the stanza of 1845 better than that of 1843? Because the dominant idea of the poem is that of a chant, a dirge, a requiem, and the form of 1845 makes to the eye the first, and proper, suggestion.

Poe had realized that there was much that was poetry only to the (physical) eye, that is, stanzaic form. As has

been indicated, he wrote to the mind's eye in perceptible images, and to the soul, *through* the fleshly ear, in music.

In discussing Longfellow's *Ballads* in 1842, he speaks, among other things, of his own definition of poetry in these words: "The elements of that beauty which is felt in sound may be the mutual or common heritage of Earth and Heaven. Contenting ourselves with the firm conviction that music (in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme) is of so vast a moment to Poesy as never to be neglected by him who is truly poetical — is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended that he is mad who rejects its assistance — content with this idea, we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality for the mere sake of rounding a definition."

He admits that this definition excludes much that supine tolerance has hitherto ranked as poetical, but he is willing to risk the approval of the thoughtful.

For all the jingle of rime, Poe would not dignify the *Essay on Man* as more than an "Essay in Rhyme." While he considers sound of vast moment to Poesy, it is inclusive in the thought that a true poem is a creation. He cannot be misunderstood in this, for he maintains that the Greek word ποιῆσις, the French expression *L'art d'exprimer les pensées par la fiction*, and the German terms *Dichtkunst*, the art of fiction, and *dichten*, to feign, are all in remarkable accord. We can surmise that Poe missed the *dichten*-element in Pope's poetry, without which sound is unavailing to raise it to the plane of Art. Poe is the poet of sound, but he is a poet.

He was fully cognizant of "the vast effect or force of melody in itself — an effect which could elevate into even momentary confusion with the highest efforts of mind compositions such as are the greater number of satires or burlesques" (6 : 126).

Granted that you have in a given piece the genuine *dichten*-element, it is not a poem without melody, or the sound-element. Melody is essential. It is sound-element that he makes the test of the stanza as presented to the eye.

This is illustrated in *The Rationale of Verse*, where he says that, "What the modern chiefly appreciates and admires in the Greek hexameter, is the *melody of the abundant vowel sounds*." In the connection he remarks that the writers of English hexameters, Professor Longfellow among them, find it difficult to get their hexameters to *sound* Greek. After some pertinent words as to whether they *looked* Greek, or not, he quotes a specimen of English hexameter from Longfellow, for looks' sake, —

"Also the church within was adorned, for this was the season
When the young, their parents' hope, and the loved ones of Heaven,
Should at the foot of the altar renew the vows of their baptism.
Therefore each nook and corner was swept and cleaned, and the dust was
Blown from the walls and ceiling, and from the oil-painted benches."

Poe is impressed with the "long-leggedness" of these hexameters, but he turns them into prose.

"Also the church within was adorned; for this was the season when the young, their parents' hope, and the loved ones of Heaven, should at the feet of the altar, renew the vows of their baptism. Therefore, each nook and corner was swept and cleaned; and the dust was blown from the walls and ceiling, and from the oil-painted benches."

He adds: "There! — That is respectable prose; and it will incur no danger of ever getting its character ruined by anybody's mistaking it for verse" (6 : 103).

The inference is that a true poem cannot be mistaken though it take the form of prose to the eye; music in its

modifications of rhythm and rime would distinguish it from prose.

Assonance, not in any specific prosodical sense, is a term applicable to the aspect of Poe's art exemplified in *Lenore*. Because recasting seems to be more difficult than creating first hand from amorphous material, *Lenore* may be taken as his apprentice-piece in this line. There are crudities in the *dichten*, or fiction, element, as well as in the assonantal.

The first line —

"Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown forever!"

contains incongruent perceptible images. Think of the conceived facts from which the metaphor is derived: a creature with wings shut up in a golden bowl, — not in a golden cage; the bowl bursts, the bird (or butterfly?) flies away. The Scriptural prestige of "golden bowl" does not quite save the line from the bad effects of a mixed metaphor. The figure is changed again in the second line, saying, "A saintly soul floats on the Stygian river." The ideas of *floating* and *flying* do not agree. The connection of thought is too close for the breach to be excused on the ground that these expressions are — two of them — distinct exclamations. There are other jumbles in the stanza, looked at from the standpoint of consistency of perceptible images, but there is hardly need to delay to make note of them.

Read now the stanza aloud. Observe how the assonance atones for the faults in the fiction of the stanza. Read the second line, —

"Let the bell toll! — a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river."

See what onomatopeia there is in "Let the bell toll!" Why, the movement suggests the pulling of the bell-cord

as well as the tones that swing out upon the solemn air. How aptly follows "a saintly soul," answering in perfect measure of sound and sense the first part of the line! Consider how fittingly the word "floats" is used. The tone of the bell floats out upon the air, that means death; "a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river," that means death too. The concord of intermingling sound and sense in this single line is noteworthy!

The stanza concludes with a repetend, —

"An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young,
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young."

Within the stanza the assonantal element is forceful in producing a sort of confusion, the mind is kept in agitation between resemblances of sound and differences of meaning, the repetend most appropriately restores equanimity.

There is no repetend to the second stanza, but observe the sentiment of it, —

"Wretches, ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride,
And when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her — that she died!
How *shall* the ritual, then, be read? the requiem how be sung
By you — by yours, the evil eye, — by yours, the slanderous tongue
That did to death the innocence that died, and died so young?"

The third stanza recurs to the sentiment of the first, but with the thought of the second fresh in mind, —

"*Peccavimus;* but rave not thus! and let a sabbath song
Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel no wrong.
The sweet Lenore hath gone before, with Hope that flew beside,
Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride:
For her, the fair and debonair, that now so lowly lies,
The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes;
The life still there, upon her hair — the death upon her eyes."

How much more pronounced is the assonance here! But the shaping motive of the stanza is radically different

from that of the second. Here is that melancholy, which Poe believed, in 1842 (8 : 270), to be inseparable from the higher manifestations of the beautiful, that finds proper and peculiar help for its expression, in "rhythm and rhyme"?

This stanza can claim nothing in favor of its fictional element over stanza one. Indeed, we are tempted to inquire if some of its perceptible images are not puerile.

As to its assonantal qualities, it is in some respects below the first stanza. How does "*Peccavimus;* but rave not thus" compare with "Let the bell toll! — a saintly soul"? Grant that the reader feels the force of "Peccavimus," is there not a querying about how many correspondences in sound are intended, and what adaptations of pronunciation are necessary? The repetend, though, is fine; the best.

The last stanza catches up, and blends, and solves, the conflict in the sentiments for Lenore and for the "wretches." The stanza is quoted without further comment, —

> "Avaunt! avaunt! from fiends below, the indignant ghost is riven —
> From Hell unto a high estate far up within the Heaven —
> From grief and groan, to a golden throne, beside the King of Heaven!
> Let no bell toll, then, — lest her soul, amid its hallowed mirth,
> Should catch the note as it doth float up from the damnèd Earth!
> And I! — to-night my heart is light! — no dirge will I upraise,
> But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days!"

Something in the nature of a summary would enable us to realize adequately the importance of *Lenore* in an account of Poe's art. He was a poet; he felt the silent tone of the self-supremacy that belongs to Genius, but believed in the absolute necessity of reconciling genius with artistic skill. The constant revision of his work attests this. He says, "I have never disbelieved in the perfect consistency, and even congeniality, of the highest genius and profoundest art" (6 : 109).

He became a critic, and for the poetry that should come before him, he resolved to be honest rather than politic in expressing his opinions. He found occasion to deliver himself upon the mooted question of English hexameters. They did not *sound* Greek; they did not even *look* Greek.

This thought smashed, with him, that *idolon* of authority for the scansion of English verse. You may believe Greek, and Latin, verse was read as scanned, but surely not so with English verse; we read according to "rhythm and rhyme." English versification thus simplified itself to his mind. Music, in its modifications of rhythm and rime, furnished the creative imagination assistance so essential and powerful that it were madness to neglect it.

Lenore is really the first exemplification of the composite character — of sound and sense — of Poe's art in poetry.

CHAPTER III

ALLEGORY

BECAUSE of Poe's *penchant* for allegory, it is apt to speak of the fictional side of his art. The two characteristics of fiction and of sound came to view in *Al Aaraaf*. We have kept trace of the course of the two elements in revisions of poem of 1831 that form a part of the volume of 1845. Recall *Israfel*, *The City in the Sea*, *The Sleeper*, and *Lenore*.

There are, of course, other poems in the edition of 1845 which were published first along through the years from 1833 to 1845. None of these had such a recasting as *Lenore*, they are for that reason all the more interesting for our study.

Does it occasion surprise at this juncture to mention that *The Coliseum*, of 1833, is blank verse of epic sentiment and power? Let the reader be warned against that spirit of criticism which thinks it sees in Poe a mere ballad-monger. He is too versatile for that. A grand theme he can handle grandly. And *Scenes from "Politian"* shows his ability to appreciate dramatic situations.

Poe was wise enough to know his power, and shrewd enough to know his gift.

The *Bridal Ballad* (1837) recalls us from this diversion in thought to plunge us into a tide of rhythm and rime. Read this stanza, —

"And thus the words were spoken,
And this the plighted vow;
And though my faith be broken,
And though my heart be broken,
Here is a ring, as token
That I am happy now!"

Now scan it. Does your scansion mean anything?

The last stanza runs, —

"Would God I could awaken!
For I dream I know not how,
And my soul is sorely shaken
Lest an evil step be taken,
Lest the dead who is forsaken
May not be happy now."

These two stanzas give strong hints of the repetend and refrain. Here in 1837 are suggestions that come to fulness of realization in 1845. This we have already seen in part in *Lenore*.

The City in the Sea is allegorical, but *The Haunted Palace* (1839) is pure allegory. The thought of it is grand and solemn. The poet, in effect, builds for us, as Abt Vogler, his "structure brave," a radiant palace in the monarch Thought's dominion, —

"Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair."

We are wanderers in that happy valley, see the glorious, golden, banners floating in the breezes, and snuff the winged odors in their dallyings with the gentle air in that sweet day. We see in through two luminous windows to where the ruler of the realm sits on his throne in state of glory well befitting. We see the fair palace door of pearl and ruby open, whence issue —

"A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king."

What can be richer, fairer, brighter? To think that was Poe in his heyday! What a piece of work the man must have been! How does the reader become a living witness of such beauties and splendors except through the force of the rhythm and rime?

But evil things in robes of sorrow brought down the monarch from his high estate, and nothing is left but a dim-remembered story. Travellers from that valley tell us now that in through the red-litten windows they can see —

> "Vast forms that move fantastically
> To a discordant melody,"

and that, out through the pale door rush a ghostly hideous throng that laugh, but smile no more.

That is dark and solemn as the grave! To the same music this palace of thought crumbles to ruin.

In no other poem, as a whole and in part, is the fictional element so richly, simply, and clearly, exhibited; and the music in nice adjustment gives motion to the "airy stream of lively portraiture."

This stanza, the last, of *To One in Paradise* (1843) is finely assonant, for it fits so well the sentiment, —

> "And all my days are trances,
> And all my nightly dreams
> Are where thy gray eye glances,
> And where thy footstep gleams —
> In what ethereal dances,
> By what eternal streams."

Another pure allegory, *The Conqueror Worm* (1843), is framed on a larger scale of thought than *The Haunted Palace;* it is the tragedy "Man," and the hero is the Conqueror Worm.

Let us think about the consistency of the perceptible images. We look into a theatre on a gala night; there sit

a throng of angels in veils, and tears; it is to be a play of hopes and fears; the orchestra breathes the music of the spheres, fitfully. The curtain is up: mimes, in the form of God, begin their muttering and mumbling, and move hither and thither; they are mere puppets, that come and go at the bidding of vast formless things, which, while they shift the scenery, flap invisible woe from their condor wings. It is a motley drama: the crowd chase a Phantom, evermore, that they can never seize; and there is Madness, and Sin, and Horror the soul of the plot. There comes out from the scenic solitude a crawling shape; it writhes; the mimes become its food. Exit: the lights are out; the curtain, a funeral pall, comes down over each quivering form; the angels uprise, unveil, and pallid and wan, affirm —

> "That the play is the tragedy, 'Man,'
> And its hero, the Conqueror Worm."

Was it, in its progress, an enigma to the spectators? It opens a mine of suggestion for doleful, but lofty, contemplation.

They are not still-life pictures, but moving pictures. Not that, merely; we look quite through the pictures at moving things! The rhythm and the rime assist so perfectly and powerfully that the illusion is complete; not better than in *The Haunted Palace*, but as good.

Observe it in this stanza, —

> "But see amid the mimic rout
> A crawling shape intrude:
> A blood-red thing that writhes from out
> The scenic solitude!
> It writhes — it writhes! — with mortal pangs
> The mimes become its food,
> And seraphs sob at vermin fangs
> In human gore imbued."

Dream-Land (1844) is a companion piece for *Fairy-Land*.

Under the guise of a traveller he relates his journey to, and through, this realm of "unsubstantial pageantry," —

> "By a route obscure and lonely,
> . . . . . .
> I have reached these lands but newly
> From an ultimate dim Thule:
> From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
> Out of Space — out of Time."

By bottomless vales, by chasms, caves, and Titan woods, by surging seas, and lakes with their lone waters, by dismal tarns and pools, the traveller meets "sheeted Memories of the Past," —

> "For the spirit that walks in shadow
> 'T is — oh, 't is an Eldorado!"

But to the traveller travelling through it, its mysteries are never exposed; its king forbids the fringed lid to be uplifted, —

> "And thus the sad Soul that here passes
> Beholds it but through darkened glasses."

That is a shrewd excuse for being so indefinite. The poem closes with singular aptness, as it began, —

> "I have wandered home but newly
> From this ultimate dim Thule."

In difference from *Fairy-Land*, the traveller journeys through the realm, and thus motion is suggested and therewith changing scenes, to all which the rhythm and the rime contribute a living sense.

With *Dream-Land* ends the list of poems ranging from 1833 to 1844, which exhibit the growth of Poe's art up to

the stage represented by the revised form of *Lenore* in 1845. It is plain from this series that he is masterful enough to yoke sound in such congenial fellowship with sense, no matter what the topic, as to have the reader realize, livingly, the sentiment.

CHAPTER IV

A MASTERPIECE: THE RAVEN

BEFORE 1845 Poe had settled in his own mind that the belief, that melancholy is inseparable from the higher manifestations of the beautiful, is omni-prevalent, and that the belief has a firm basis in nature and reason; and more, that rhythm and rime are, therewith, of essential and especial aid in attaining the finest effects of poesy (8:270).

He had also determined that, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world is the death of a beautiful woman, to be sung by the lips of a bereaved lover.

Under the stress of these convictions, *Lenore* seems to be the immediate precursor of *The Raven.*

If *The Raven* were written in the winter of 1843–44 (10:157), in 1843 appeared also the "Pioneer version" of *Lenore* (10:169). *The Raven* was published in January, 1845; in the same year was published the final form of *Lenore* (10:166). May not the short verse of the "Pioneer version" of *Lenore* have been changed to the long, because of the long verse of *The Raven?* Who knows but the verse of the first draft of *The Raven* was short too? A suggestion has been made as to why the short verse of *Lenore* was made long. In any case, *Lenore* is the logical antecedent, in topic and treatment, of *The Raven.*

And thus we are brought to consider *The Raven*, that marvel of subtle conception, and of masterful skill in

versification. Intuitively, we know its charm and own its spell: let us, discursively, seek to learn how its magic works.

"Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore, —
While I nodded, nearly napping."

Conceive the physical and mental state suggested in these lines. He was nodding, nearly napping, already in that obscure route to Dream-Land. It was most natural he should be, for it was midnight, and dreary, and he was weak and weary; he had been doing heavy work — he *pondered* — in quaint and curious lore.

But this company of words, to wit, "midnight," "dreary," "weak," "weary," "nodded," "napping," are for the reader, and the simple ideo-motor power of them contributes to induce drowsiness. The hypnotist does little more than pronounce, monotonously, words that suggest sleep, depending upon their ideo-motor power for results.

Powerful as these words are individually, through suggestion, they come in the ascending order of their importance to the effect to be produced. And more wonderful, they come in a way that rocks the reader in rhythm, and lullabies him with concordances of sound and sense exquisite in sensation.

The purpose, however, of these lines is not to put the reader to sleep, — there is variety rich, for an antidote; but to have him incarnate, so to speak, that student, weak and weary, nodding, napping. There he sits, not a picture, but a veined human being, falling asleep with some curious thoughts, half-pondered, in his mind. He is flesh, he is weary; his blood flows as the lines are rhythmic.

But, —

"Suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
'''T is some visitor,' I muttered, 'tapping at my chamber door:
Only this and nothing more.'"

Observe that the first half of the stanza is a record of his falling asleep, and the second half, his awaking out of that sleep. The word "suddenly" is used with rare appropriateness. Hold it in mind while you glance at the events of his awakening to rational consciousness.

He is first awake to a "tapping," which means less noise than "rapping;" as consciousness returns it sounds like one "gently rapping;" the repetition of "rapping" recovers him his consciousness, so that he concluded that it *is* some one "*tapping*," and nothing more. The expression, "only this and nothing more," betrays a secret anxiety that interests us in him. What has he been reading? What is he vaguely expecting?

This man is become a nervous, quivering creature, talking to himself, with a thrilling experience to tell, could we hear it.

The student is the speaker in the first stanza, but the impression is that he is talking in a dream, so we feel that it is the poet who introduces him to our interest.

But from the first word of the second stanza, he is wide awake, and enchains us with his story as a traveller new-returned from Wonderland.

Hear him, —

"Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; — vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow — sorrow for the lost Lenore,
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore:
Nameless here for evermore."

The word "distinctly" promises what the reader craves.

Add "in the bleak December" to "midnight dreary," and you have made way for the dying embers at their ghostly tricks upon the floor. That, so suggestively, describes a most distressing state of mind. His grief for the lost Lenore is inconsolable. No wonder, for she was the familiar of the angels; she was rare and radiant; they named her; for him to name her would be profanity. So poignant was his sorrow that he could find no respite from it, in pondering quaint and curious things; he "eagerly" wished for morning; in his despair he felt, naturally, something hauntingly imminent: the ghostly flickerings on the floor reveal most poetically his mental condition.

When we hear the word "remember," and next, the word "December," there is then musically emphasized to our attention "ember," the causative word of the series,— causative of the shadows so symbolical.

In the same way think of "morrow," and "borrow," and "sorrow," and "sorrow" repeated becomes a wail.

Seeing ghostly figures is agitating enough, but hearing therewith ghostly noises is racking. Listen, —

"And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me — filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before."

"Rustling" is the chief onomatopoetic word, but see what further differentiation takes place in the addition of "sad," and on top of that the word "uncertain;" "each" purple curtain — a ghostly company — "flaps shadowy sounds from visionary wings." No apter word could describe the effect, in its process of taking place, than "thrilled;" and in its finished state, than "filled," — filled with fantastic terrors.

If the reader will undertake to trace the sense-suggestions in their intricate interworkings in the first line, and

then observe their unification by the rhythm, he will be "thrilled" with the means and the manner of execution.

Full of fright, he stood, and to still the beating of his heart, like some boy whistling to keep up his courage, he kept repeating, —

"'T is some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door,
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door:
This it is and nothing more.'"

These lines labor in the reading, suiting so well the stages of hesitation, deliberation, and decision, all in such marked contrast to the first lines of the stanza.

After the deliberation indicated in the repetend and the decision expressed in the refrain, it is time for action, so —

"Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
'Sir,' said I, 'or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you' — here I opened wide the door:
Darkness there and nothing more."

That is a smooth apology, but it is made behind a closed door to a "Sir" or "Madam" without. It portrays finely his trepidation. He was dead sure of opening to some one; but there was naught but darkness. He could not believe it, —

"Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before."

His vision could pierce to nothing, but his imaginings ran riot with his senses. He listened, —

"But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, 'Lenore?'
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, 'Lenore':
Merely this and nothing more."

He stood there "long," and looked and listened, but all was blank and void darkness.

"But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,"

so he called in a whisper, "Lenore?" What evil thing he was fearing was not there, nor was his good angel. The echo of his own heart's sorrow was all that was murmured back.

"Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
'Surely,' said I, 'surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore;
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;
'T is the wind and nothing more.'"

Turning back into his chamber, he was still more perplexed to hear a tapping at his window lattice. This time he concludes it is the wind, and is more prompt to explore the mystery.

"Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore."

A visitor through the window! Note his strange impoliteness.

"Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door,
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door:
Perched, and sat, and nothing more."

The whole incident is diverting; the current of his thought and feeling is for the while turned about.

"Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore, —
'Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,' I said, 'art sure no craven,

Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore:
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!'
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"

The bird is regarded as ominous though. He is "of the saintly days of yore;" he is the "ghostly grim and ancient Raven" from the "Night's Plutonian shore." That darkness into which he had just been peering was to his soul Plutonian. His first "Nevermore" was rather startling.

"Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning — little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door,
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such a name as 'Nevermore.'

"But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered, not a feather then he fluttered,
Till I scarcely more than muttered, — 'Other friends have flown before;
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before.'
Then the bird said, 'Nevermore.'"

What had little meaning at first, soon came to bear a significant relevancy. He barely thought aloud that this visitor, stranger, would be gone to-morrow, as his friends and hopes had taken leave, but the Raven's answer aroused a new strain of feeling and speculation, —

"Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
'Doubtless,' said I, 'what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore:
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of Never — nevermore.'"

His interest becomes more serious.

"But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore,
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking 'Nevermore.'"

This is a wholly different mind-state from "wondering," "fearing," "doubting." But see how it changes, —

"This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er
She shall press, ah, nevermore!"

How naturally is the thought-connection between the Raven's "Nevermore" and the lover's lost Lenore made! It is quickly and intensely realized.

"Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.
'Wretch,' I cried, 'thy God hath lent thee — by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite — respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!'
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"

At the most propitious moment for his peace of mind, when he hears the footfalls of the angels, and is persuading himself that they bring him respite and nepenthe for his sorrow, the cup is dashed from his lips with a cruel "Nevermore." The word becomes ominous to him,

"'Prophet!' said I, 'thing of evil! prophet still, if a bird or devil!
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted —

On this home by Horror haunted — tell me truly, I implore:
Is there — *is* there balm in Gilead? — tell me — tell me, I implore!'
Quoth the Raven 'Nevermore.'"

There is no surcease of sorrow for him here, but what about it beyond this mortal weeping?

"'Prophet!' said I, 'thing of evil — prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us, by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore:
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore!'
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"

What is left now but defiance to the confirmation of his own prophetic soul?

"'Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!' I shrieked, upstarting:
'Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!'
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"

In *The Philosophy of Composition*, Poe speaks some words on the two closing stanzas of *The Raven*.

"But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness, which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required: first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, second, some amount of suggestiveness, some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with the *ideal*. It is the *excess* of

the suggested meaning — it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under current of the theme — which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

"Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem — their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The under-current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines —

"'Take thy beak from out *my heart*, and take thy form from off my door!'
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"

"It will be observed that the words, 'from out my heart,' involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, 'Nevermore;' dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical — but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly to be seen: —

"And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor:
And my soul *from out that shadow* that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted — nevermore!"

True it is that *The Raven* is not an allegory, but that it is allegorical the careful reader must surmise long before he reaches the last two stanzas. And Poe's statement of the allegorical theme is not specific enough: it was more than a mournful remembrance, it was painful with fear and

trembling, as if half-conscious that Nemesis was at hand. He might have sinned as Tamerlane: in unearthly pride.

It is in *The Philosophy of Composition* that the poet speaks of the interview between the student and the Raven, and how the "Nevermore" of the bird finds echo in his heart. He says: "The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer 'Nevermore'" (6:45).

It should be remembered that the lover is to be looked at as both the victim, so to put it, of the experiences, and as their raconteur. When we follow the flow of the human wondering, fearing, trembling, doubting, through the successive stanzas, we can see no intention to luxuriate in sorrow, but when we think of the lover celebrating them as his own experiences, then is he indulging in sorrow as a luxury. Not in the moments of suffering is sorrow a luxury, but in the after-moments of recalling and narrating.

With regard to the technique of the poem, it seems opportune to quote this from *The Rationale of Verse*. "Verse originates in the human enjoyment of equality, fitness. To this enjoyment, also, all the moods of verse — rhythm, metre, stanza, rhyme, alliteration, the *refrain*, and other analogous effects — are to be referred."

Certainly *The Raven* is Poe's finest exemplification of "equality" and "fitness" in all the particulars of verse.

For "equality" in particular, he has this to say which has a significance applicable to *The Raven*. "The perception of pleasure in the equality of *sounds* is the principle of Music. Unpractised ears can appreciate only simple equalities, such as are found in ballad airs. While comparing one simple

sound with another they are too much occupied to be capable of comparing the equality subsisting between these two simple sounds, taken conjointly, and two other similar simple sounds taken conjointly. Practised ears, on the other hand, appreciate both equalities at the same instant — although it is absurd to suppose that both are *heard* at the same instant. One is heard and appreciated from itself: the other is heard by memory; and the instant glides into and is confounded with the secondary appreciation. Highly cultivated musical taste in this manner enjoys not only these double equalities, all appreciated at once, but takes pleasurable cognizance, through memory, of equalities the members of which occur at intervals so great that the uncultivated taste loses them altogether. That this latter can properly estimate or decide on the merits of what is called scientific music is of course impossible. But scientific music has no claim to intrinsic excellence; it is fit for scientific ears alone. In its excess it is the triumph of the *physique* over the *morale* of music" (6:57).

This drawing of the line on what is "*caviare* to the general" may seem to smack of sour grapes, but who could write *The Coliseum* in 1833, and *To M. L. S.* in 1847, and *To* —— —— and *To Helen* in 1848, should be secure from the taunt.

Defiant disregard of authority, or better, his daring common sense, though rude in utterance in many instances, — common sense is generally rude to the conventional, — brought him to know his gift and how to exercise it.

It is doubtless true that Poe did not know enough, but he was *wise* about what he did know.

But there is one other passage to quote from *The Rationale of Verse* before recurring to the thought of the above extract. He has spoken of the *essentialities* of verse, then,

"What follows may, strictly speaking, be regarded as embellishment, merely; but even in this embellishment, the rudimental sense of *equality* would have been the never-ceasing impulse. It would, for example, be simply in seeking farther administration to this sense that men would come, in time, to think of the *refrain*, or burden, where, at the closes of the several stanzas of a poem, one word or phrase is *repeated;* and of alliteration, in whose simplest form a consonant is *repeated* in the commencements of various words. This effect would be extended so as to embrace repetitions both of vowels and of consonants, in the bodies as well as in the beginnings of words; and, at a later period, would be made to infringe on the province of rhyme, by the introduction of general similarity of sound between whole feet occurring in the body of a line."

What, now, has Poe accomplished as an artist? He has chosen, in *The Raven*, the simplest form of verse enjoyed by the unpractised ear as possessing all the essentialities of verse, and has introduced into this confined form all the "equalities" that he designates "embellishments." The equalities of similarity which the "scientific" musician puts at intervals too great for the untrained ear to enjoy, are caught up and brought together for all to appreciate. This artistic feat cannot be despised; it challenges admiration.

There is pleasure in *The Raven* for the boor; there is melody for the connoisseur, —

> "Here, work enough to watch
> The Master work, and catch
> Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play."

CHAPTER V

MASTER-STROKES: EULALIE, ULALUME, ANNABEL LEE, FOR ANNIE

THERE is a circle of poems that, in topic and handling, seem to issue from, or be connected with, *Lenore*. They are *The Raven*, *Eulalie*, *Ulalume*, *Annabel Lee*, *For Annie*.

Lenore, — of *The Raven*, — Eulalie, Ulalume, Annabel Lee, Annie, are the different phases of the poet's Platonic ideal, showing through the mid-region of his gloom.

His love is apotheosized as Lenore in the poem *Lenore*. She is riven —

"From grief and groan, to a golden throne, beside the King of Heaven!"

This poem is not allegorical, but it shows why the others are; out of it comes the thread that binds the chaplet.

The Raven celebrates his sorrow for the lost Lenore, for that rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore. *Lenore* closed with —

"And I! — to-night my heart is light! — no dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days!"

With this ("light") mood *Eulalie* is in fine accord. What, can you imagine, would be more like "a Pæan of old days"?

In *Lenore*, she, "the fair and debonair," with —

"The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes,"

was to have been his bride; but in *Eulalie*, "the fair and gentle," "the yellowed-haired young Eulalie," is his bride: the bride of his soul.

The motive that prompted the pæan is two-fold: it is not merely that Lenore was translated to a high estate in Heaven, but that she was snatched from more than fiends on Earth. It is the predominance of the one side of the motive that gives us *Eulalie*, the predominance of the other side giving us *Ulalume*. There is a natural revulsion from a feeling for her sake, to a feeling for himself left alone in a world among more than fiends.

It is not the bright eyes of Eulalie that draw him, but it is the door of a tomb, — of the vault of his lost Ulalume, that stops him. The thought and sentiment of the two poems are, from every point, in diametrical contrast.

Annabel Lee is connected in thought with both these poems. It was because the angels, not half so happy in heaven as these two lovers, went envying them, that the wind came out of the cloud by night, chilling and killing Annabel Lee; it was because of a love that was more than love, that her highborn kinsman, the winged seraphs of heaven, came and bore her away from him, and shut her up in this sepulchre by the sea.

In the spirit of *Eulalie*, he sings, —

> "And neither the angels in heaven above,
> Nor the demons down under the sea,
> Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
> Of the beautiful Annabel Lee."

That he feels her bright eyes, and calls her his bride, recurs to *Eulalie*; that she is in her sepulchre suggests *Ulalume*.

Read the last stanza, —

> "For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
> Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling — my darling — my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea."

The poem, *For Annie*, seems to take its cue from the idea of the lover's lying down by the side of his darling in her sepulchre.

He thanks Heaven that the fever called "Living" is conquered at last, and that he lies composedly in his bed, his narrow bed, where his tantalized spirit blandly reposes where it lies happily —

"Bathing in many
A dream of the truth
And the beauty of Annie,
Drowned in a bath
Of the tresses of Annie."

There thus appears to be among these poems a sort of sequence, that renders all susceptible of allegorical meaning. As to the art of series, they are of one type, assonance being the marked characteristic. What it is in its richness, variety, fitness, and force, has been made manifest in *The Raven*.

Eulalie is the radiant girl who redeems his soul from its stagnant tide in a world of moan. The poet has the lover to sketch her features. He speaks of being alone —

"Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing bride,
Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie became my smiling bride."

Observe with what effect the form of the repetend is used to impress the lines and colors of the dear girl. She is "fair and gentle," and "blushing;" she is "yellow-haired young," and "smiling." Her eyes are bright as the stars, but her curls!

"And never a flake
That the vapor can make
With the moon-tints of purple and pearl
Can vie with the modest Eulalie's most unregarded curl,
Can compare with the bright-eyed Eulalie's most humble and careless curl."

But as to her eyes, he says Astarte shines, all day long, bright in the sky, —

"While ever to her dear Eulalie upturns her matron eye,
While ever to her young Eulalie upturns her violet eye."

The poem is not written to the sense of hearing is why there is so little onomatopeia in it; it is a picture for the mind's eye in which the ideo-motor ideas to sight-perception are made rhythmical through the melody of the verse. With what skill the poet has put the differences sweet into forms framed of like words!

Ulalume relates the story of a lone walk, and a talk, with his soul. So distressful is the condition of feeling depicted, that it must be for the loss of his Eulalie, — that bright name to be changed to Ulalume. Think of the place! By the dim lake, by the dank tarn, of Auber, in the misty mid-region, in the ghoul-haunted woodland, of Weir. It was in October when the skies were ashen, and the leaves crisped and withering and sere.

Note the description, —

"Here once, through an alley Titanic
Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul —
Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.
These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll,
As the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole,
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
In the realms of the boreal pole."

There is movement and picture and sound to suit, with repetend on repetend, and rhythm and rime to aid!

At the end of their path a light from nebulous lustre is born. Watch the process, —

> "And now, as the night was senescent
> And star-dials pointed to morn,
> As the star-dials hinted of morn,
> At the end of our path a liquescent
> And nebulous lustre was born,
> Out of which a miraculous crescent
> Arose with a duplicate horn,
> Astarte's bediamonded crescent
> Distinct with its duplicate horn."

Do the words "senescent," "liquescent," and "crescent" have a strange sound in company with such words as "morn," "born," and "horn"? But, "inceptives," they repeat so delicately the idea and function of the stanza.

He was ready in his gloom to welcome this new light as pointing, "To the Lethean peace of the skies;" but Psyche would mistrust it, letting her wings, in terror, trail in the dust. To encourage her —

> "I replied — 'this is nothing but dreaming:
> Let us on by this tremulous light!
> Let us bathe in this crystalline light!
> Its sibyllic splendor is beaming
> With hope and in beauty to-night:
> See, it flickers up the sky through the night!
> Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,
> And be sure it will lead us aright:
> We safely may trust to a gleaming
> That cannot but guide us aright,
> Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night.'"

The birth of the light of hope in the gloom of his soul is for the "Lethean peace;" this is coquetted into a "sibyl-

lic splendor," which he is quickly ready to trust, "since it flickers up to Heaven." The verse tells this part of the story with all the archness of a new love winning a widowed heart.

But, the dénouement, —

> "Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
> And tempted her out of her gloom,
> And conquered her scruples and gloom;
> And we passed to the end of the vista,
> But were stopped by the door of a tomb,
> By the door of a legended tomb;
> And I said — 'What is written, sweet sister,
> On the door of this legended tomb?'
> She replied — 'Ulalume — Ulalume —
> 'T is the vault of thy lost Ulalume!'"

It was the "sky" that had grown ashen and sober, in the first stanza, but now it is his heart that is crisped and sere as the leaves in the lonesome October. The memory of the old drives out the new.

There is a love that is not false and flattering, it is Child-Love. This the poet has the lover sing in *Annabel Lee*. "It was many and many a year ago," in a kind of fairy-realm, it seems now: "In a kingdom by the sea," where there was no other thought for two dear children than to love and be loved by each other.

Tamerlane (1827) thought his Ada was worthy of all love, and that his childish love, because it lacked "its *passion*," was without sin. He felt that —

> "'T was such as angel minds above
> Might envy — her young heart the shrine
> On which my every hope and thought
> Were incense."

The vehemence of the sentiment comes as an echo from the humanism of the Renaissance. Platonic? It strikes

one that way! But the vehemence of the sentiment has, in a fitting sense, the vehemence of a name: Annabel Lee. That is a name musical enough to charm with. The far-awayness of the event, in childhood, — in a sepulchre by the sounding sea, excuses the first impression that the poem is but a recollection of "the nothing of a name." It is executed in the spirit of the fairy story. It does not begin with "Once upon a time," but with the more poetical "It was many and many a year ago." It was in a "kingdom" they lived, and a "highborn kinsman" came and bore her away; but nothing, neither angels nor demons, —

> "Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
> Of the beautiful Annabel Lee."

The equalities and fitnesses here, as in the other poems of the series, challenge admiration.

If any one poem, more than another, exhibits in its outward form a closer correspondence to its sentiment, that poem is entitled *For Annie*. The lover is represented as composing himself, after the fever called "Living" is over, in his narrow bed for his final slumber. The very confinedness of the thought is seen in the short lines of the stanza, —

> "Sadly I know
> I am shorn of my strength,
> And no muscle I move
> As I lie at full length:
> But no matter! — I feel
> I am better at length."

There is here none of the roominess suggested in the stanza of *The Raven*. A more interesting feature is that every stanza of the poem is a paradox. The words themselves declare one sentiment, that of rest and composure,

while the movement of the words in a stanza contradict with the spirit of restlessness, —

"And I rest so composedly
Now, in my bed,
That any beholder
Might fancy me dead,
Might start at beholding me,
Thinking me dead."

Here is another, illustrative, —

"The moaning and groaning,
The sighing and sobbing,
Are quieted now,
With that horrible throbbing
At heart: — ah, that horrible,
Horrible throbbing!"

The paradoxical nature of the stanza issues logically from the conception that the lover is dead, yet telling how he fell —

"Deeply to sleep
From the heaven of her breast.

"When the light was extinguished,
She covered me warm,
And she prayed to the angels
To keep me from harm,
To the queen of the angels
To shield me from harm."

In this round of poems Poe has proved his faith by his works. The simple ballad form held, for him, all the "essentialities" of verse. By varying and extending the equalities of the simple form with what he termed "embellishments," he enlarged the function and possibilities of melody in verse, in evidence whereof these poems, masterpieces, stand to his praise.

CHAPTER VI

THE CLIMAX: THE BELLS

ACCUSTOMED as we are, from infancy up, to so much "rhyme without reason," in our nursery jingles and melodies, we associate some of Poe's poetry, remotely, at first blush, with the negroes singing "in the cotton and the corn." So much sound makes us suspicious of the sense, but a little closer ear appreciates delicate and telling onomatopoetic effects. Liquids and vowels join hands in sweetest fellowship to untie "the hidden soul of harmony."

As if, at last, to give the world assurance that he had been trifling with rhythm and rime, he wrote *The Bells*.

The secret of the charm resides in the humanizing of the tones of the bells. It is not personification, but the speaking in person to our souls. To appreciate this more fully, observe how Ruskin humanizes the sky for us. "Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful, never the same for two moments together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its infinity, its appeal to what is immortal in us, is as distinct, as its ministry of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal is essential."

Poe made so much of music in his doctrine of poetry, yet he never humanized the notes of a musical instrument, as did Dryden in the *Song for Saint Cecilia's Day*, —

"The soft complaining flute
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whispered by the warbling lute."

Or, —

"Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains and height of passion,
For the fair, disdainful dame."

He took the common bells, — the more praise for his artistic judgment, — and rang them through all the diapason of human sentiment.

If we have imagined a closer correspondence between expression and conception, in the previously considered poems, than really exists, there can be no doubt on that point, even to the mind of the wayfaring man, in reading *The Bells*.

If it be thought that the poet could harp on only one theme, let the variety of topic in *The Bells* protest.

Again, Poe's doctrine of "rhythm and rhyme" finds its amplest verification in *The Bells*. Reason and not "ecstatic intuition," led him to conclude that English versification is exceedingly simple, that "one tenth of it, possibly, may be called ethereal; nine tenths, however, appertain to the mathematics; and the whole is included within the limits of the commonest common-sense."

It must be believed that Poe appropriated, with the finest artistic discernment, the vitalizing power of rhythm and rime, and nowhere with more skill than in *The Bells*. It is the climax of his art on its technical side.

Read the poem and think back over the course of the development of the poet's art-instincts.

I.

Hear the sledges with the bells,
Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars, that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells, —
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II.

Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!
Through the balmy air of night
How they ring out their delight!
From the molten-golden notes,
And all in tune,
What a liquid ditty floats
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!
Oh, from out the sounding cells,
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
How it swells!
How it dwells

On the Future! how it tells
Of the rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells, —
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

III.

Hear the loud alarum bells,
Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!
In the startled ear of night
How they scream out their affright!
Too much horrified to speak,
They can only shriek, shriek,
Out of tune,
In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,
Leaping higher, higher, higher,
With a desperate desire,
And a resolute endeavor
Now — now to sit or never,
By the side of the pale-faced moon.
Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
What a tale their terror tells
Of Despair!
How they clang, and clash, and roar!
What a horror they outpour
On the bosom of the palpitating air!
Yet the ear it fully knows,
By the twanging
And the clanging,
How the danger ebbs and flows;
Yet the ear distinctly tells,

In the jangling
And the wrangling,
How the danger sinks and swells, —
By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells,
Of the bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells, —
In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!

IV.

Hear the tolling of the bells,
Iron bells!
What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!
In the silence of the night
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of their tone!
For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a groan.
And the people — ah, the people,
They that dwell up in the steeple,
All alone,
And who tolling, tolling, tolling
In that muffled monotone,
Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone —
They are neither man nor woman,
They are neither brute nor human,
They are Ghouls:
And their king it is who tolls;
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,
Rolls
A pæan from the bells;
And his merry bosom swells
With the pæan of the bells,

And he dances, and he yells:
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the pæan of the bells,
Of the bells:
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the throbbing of the bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells—
To the sobbing of the bells;
Keeping time, time, time,
As he knells, knells, knells,
In a happy Runic rhyme,
To the rolling of the bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells:
To the tolling of the bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

With this perfect example of the informing power of sentiment in poetry sounding in our ears, we may conclude this study by recurring to the dictum,—

"For of the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form and doth the body make,"

feeling that we are entitled to write Edgar Allan Poe down as Poet and Artist.

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